DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 186 306 SO 012 536

TITLE	Breaking the Silence: Seven Courses in Women's Studies.
INSTITUTION	Education Development Center, Inc., Newton, Mass.; Goddard Coll., Plainfield, Vt.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C. Women's Educational Equity Act Program.
PUB DATE	79
NOTE	169p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Education Development Center, 55 Chapel Street, Newton, MA 02160 ($4.75)
EDRS PRICE	MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	Adolescents; Adults; Black Literature; Course Descriptions; Cross Cultural Studies; Cultural Awareness; Employed Women; Ethnic Discrimination; *Females; *Feminism; Postsecondary Education; Prisoners; Secondary Education; *Sex Discrimination; Socialization; United States History; Units of Study; *Womens Studies

ABSTRACT

The document describes women's studies courses suitable for traditional and nontraditional educational settings. It is intended for adolescent and adult women whose access to education and employment has been limited because of race, sex, or class discrimination. Included are seven course descriptions: 1) "Black Women Writers" which examines poetry and short stories with reference to self-image and images of family, work, and relationships; 2) An introduction to women's history in the United States which examines women's oral history, issues of women's economic and social survival, alternative lifestyles and work, and the lives of women omitted from textbooks; 3) "Reading and Writing About Women" in which students read poetry and present dramatic readings; 4) "Sex Roles and Socialization" which examines images and life stages of women; 5) "Women in Cross-Cultural Perspective" which includes topics on ethnocentrism, matriarchies, women in the family, women and work, and strategies for change; 6) "Women in Prison" which examines myths, what is really "criminal," the daily life of women prisoners, the writings of women in prison, young women and juvenile delinquency, and alternatives to imprisonment; and 7) "Women and Their Working Lives" which explores how the present economic structure and social expectations affect women's relationship to work, and provides practical knowledge for use in pursuing work. Each description provides objectives, teaching methods, a bibliography of resources, and an outline of sessions. (KC)

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BREAKING THE SILENCE

Seven Courses in Women's Studies

FEMINIST STUDIES
Goddard-Cambridge Graduate Program in Social Change
Goddard College

SO 012 536

Women's Educational Equity Act Program
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE
Patricia Roberts Harris, Secretary

Mary F. Berry, Assistant Secretary for Education

MAY 9 1980

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The activity which is the subject of this report was produced under a grant from the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of Education, under the auspices of the Women's Educational Equity Act. However, the opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the Office of Education, and no official endorsement by the Office of Education should be inferred.

Printed and distributed by Education Development Center, 1979
55 Chapel Street, Newton Massachusetts 02160.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

During this project, one of our greatest satisfactions has been the opportunity to work with a diverse group of people who willingly shared valuable insights and information with us.

We gratefully thank Carol Shea and Laura Sperazi for giving generously of their time, and Group School staff members Barbara Gates, Susan Klaw, and Adria Steinberg for sharing their teaching and curriculum development experiences.

We want to take this opportunity to especially thank all the site staff and participants, without whom this project could not have succeeded.

Finally, we wish to thank the following people for their energy and support.

Audiovisual	Carol Frenier, Erika Funke, Linda DiRocco and the staff of Mediaworks, Inc., Carol Doyle Van Valkenburgh
Book Production	Connie Breece, Chris Czernik, Deborah Pearlman, Lynn Schreihofer
Book Title	Anita Diamant, Editor <u>Equal Times</u>, Boston-area feminist newspaper
Evaluation	Connie Breece
Financial Management	Keith Draper, Grace McClellan -- Goddard College
Grant Liaison Representatives	Deborah Pearlman, Coordinator Feminist Studies Program Rochelle Ruthchild, Core Faculty Feminist Studies Program Lynn Schreihofer, Graduate Research Assistant
Book Cover, Graphics	Rachel Burger, Urban Planning Aid, Community Press Features
Interior Covers	Deborah Gould

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In order to change what is, we need to give speech to what has been, to imagine what might be.

--Adrienne Rich

On Lies, Secrets and Silence

User's Guide

DEBORAH PEARLMAN, feminist and therapist, served as program coordinator for this project and for the women's studies program the following year. Active in the fields of community mental health and education, she has served on many projects for Goddard College and for women's community groups.

LYNN SCHREIHOFER acted as a coordinator of this project. She has been an active feminist in the Los Angeles and Boston women's communities. Her educational background and interests are in women's history and feminist theory.

User's Guide

Introduction

In October 1977, Feminist Studies at the Goddard-Cambridge Graduate Program in Social Change, a program of Goddard College, was awarded a small grant to develop a project to help eliminate sex bias in education. The project, originally titled "The Role Integration Packet," was funded for one year by the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of Education, under the Women's Educational Equity Act. The project proposed to develop, teach, and evaluate interdisciplinary women's studies courses for adolescent and adult women whose access to education and employment has been limited because of race, class, and sex discrimination. Breaking the Silence: Seven Courses in Women's Studies seeks to address the effects of sex-role stereotyping on the lives of Third World, poor, working-class, and institutionalized women. It includes a User's Guide, General Resources, and the following seven course descriptions: Black Women Writers, Introduction to Women's History in the U.S., Reading and Writing about Women's Lives, Sex Roles and Socialization, Women in Cross-Cultural Perspective, Women in Prison, and Women and Their Working Lives.

These courses were designed and authored from a feminist perspective by fourteen educators and activists in the Boston and western Massachusetts women's communities. Feminism, as we define it:

> challenges the unequal power relationships between women and men that prevent women from achieving their full human potential;
>
> provides solutions to the problems of functioning in a sexist society;
>
> values women's experiences and selfhood and encourages the development of positive self-concepts and strength; and
>
> recognizes the necessity and power of women working together toward our freedom.

As feminists, we are committed to ending the exploitation of women by sex, race, class, and sexual identity. We believe that consciousness raising and collective action are the best means for working toward our own self-determination, and that education is an important vehicle for making changes in our lives. In asserting the bonds between us as women, we do not want to minimize the differences between us -- between white women and women of color, between women of economic privilege and those in poverty, between women who are paid for their work and those who are not. So much information about our lives has been ignored and hidden from us. We need to break down the isolation and "conspiracy of silence" that surrounds us.

As an educational focus of the women's movement, women's studies examines the reflection of personal and social power in economic and political systems, proscribed sex roles, language, and cultural values. The contribution of women's studies to a critical examination of society and to uncovering crucial historical and cultural information about women has been enormous. One of the most important areas of concern has been sex-role socialization. By sex roles we mean sets of behavioral patterns and personality traits that are expected of males and females on the basis of gender alone. Gender-linked rules of behavior are extremely limiting to personal development and detrimental to society as a whole. The effects on women in particular are far reaching. Overemphasis on women's nurturing role and sexual and reproductive functions has resulted in the demeaning of our other valuable capacities. In most societies, both geographically and historically, the characteristics, traits, and activities associated with the masculine gender -- and therefore labeled "inherently masculine"-- are assigned a higher social value by the culture than those of females. This pattern prevails even where the economic activities of women have a recognized value. Since there are no identified qualities inherent in maleness and femaleness to explain men's greater power, sexism must be seen as a product of culture.

As a major institution through which values are transmitted, the educational system in this country has encouraged and maintained stereotyped sex roles. By channeling females and males into activities and programs supposedly suitable for each sex, it fosters a value system that puts a premium on male achievement and independence while encouraging females to plan for marriage and motherhood. But this process begins even before a person enters school. The family is now recognized as the major institution through which attitudes and rules of behavior are first instilled in children. It is the place where women are initially socialized into their future roles as wives and mothers. As children reach puberty, they begin to explore who they are and who they want to become. School becomes an important forum for these issues. Young women are encouraged at home and at school to find intimacy and identity solely through male peers. Consequently, the core of woman's adult personality becomes organized around passivity, dependence, and self-effacement. In response to the prevailing effects of social conditioning on both women and men, our courses emphasize sex-role socialization as one major theme.

The problem of sexism, however, cannot be examined merely from the standpoint of sex roles. Sexism as a specific form of exploitation must be viewed in its entire context. Attitudes alone do not determine what people do with their lives. In addition to school and family, other institutions define and limit possibilities on the basis of race, economic class, and sexual identity. Third World, poor, and working-class women often face obstacles such as inadequate health care, poor nutrition, inferior education, and lack of information about sexual and reproductive options. The majority of women workers are clustered in marginally skilled, low-paying fields. Because the prevailing ideology contends that "woman's place" is working in the home, we are paid less for not staying there. In most situtions, we also put in double work days as unpaid housewives and mothers. To critique this pattern only in terms of sex-role stereotyping is to

suggest that it can be changed by altering self-perceptions, aspirations, and attitudes. In fact, the limited economic choices of specific groups of women and men result from the class stratification necessary to capitalism. Assertions of racial, ethnic, or sexual inferiority mask the exploitation of large numbers of workers.

The developers of this educational project were aware of the limitations of examining only one of the constraining factors in women's lives (gender) without questioning equally powerful determinants (race, class, sexuality). The combined effects of these factors have not been adequately addressed in traditional school settings. To take one striking example, the issue of homosexual and lesbian preference is completely suppressed in primary and secondary education. We do not discourage discussions of lesbian choice. We have found that discussions about it arise in all educational settings when permitted. We feel it is important to provide a forum where participants are free to discuss whatever they are concerned or curious about.

Women's studies programs have made great progress in identifying and addressing the negative socialization of males and females. Largely confined to universities and a few women's centers, these programs have been severely limited in the numbers of women they reach. Just as questions about women's lives are being asked and answered by women in academia, women outside schools are asking questions and finding answers. Both groups of women need to hear each other's voices. Our struggles take place as often in homes and factories as in college classrooms. Women have a rich social and cultural heritage that should be the foundation for educational materials inside and outside the classroom. Our courses bring together information from both academic and nonacademic women -- information that speaks from our experiences as women.

In envisioning an educational project that critiques societal expectations for women, we felt that priority must be given to Third World, low-income, and institutionalized women. They, even more than other women, are hampered by the effects of poverty and discrimination. No project, including ours, can make a significant difference in the problem of differential achievement by class and race. That would necessitate a reorganization of social structures and patterns far beyond the school system. However, women's studies courses such as ours can begin to explore the hidden assumptions by which society operates. Rather than analyze the factors of class, sex, and race separately, we want to examine the interconnections that make up a woman's life. Pervasive as these factors are, though, they do not represent the totality of women's lives. Women are by no means passive victims in a society totally out of our control. Despite far-reaching problems, women have a tremendous amount of courage, strength, endurance, and will to fight. We create ways of coping with and affecting the world, supporting one another, and fighting for what we need. In the following course descriptions, the authors explore a variety of responses to social conditions and offer some alternative ways of perceiving ourselves and our world. We hope to inspire one another with a sense of our individual and collective worth and capacities, and to direct our energies toward making positive changes in our lives.

GOALS

In designing this women's studies project, we used three basic strategies: Consciousness raising, resource sharing, and skill building. Consciousness raising links our personal experiences with broader global and historical ones. It promotes an understanding of our oppression and our strengths as women. Resource sharing provides information about community and educational services and expertise. It encourages both participants and facilitators to pool their knowledge and expertise in developing a successful project. Skill building encourages women to learn or expand concrete skills such as reading, writing, critical analysis, and job-seeking techniques. All these strategies motivate women to create change beyond the project itself.

METHODOLOGY

Our immediate objectives were to set up a network for conveying information about the program, to locate sites for presenting the courses, to gain an understanding of the needs of participants, and to develop a program that could be used by other schools and community organizations throughout the country. Our successes and difficulties are briefly described below.

We envision this material being used by educators, activists, and community workers who are already working with a specific group of women. We assume you are familiar with their concerns and with the structure, policies, and objectives of your organization. Therefore, the time and energy we had to spend familiarizing ourselves with a multitude of people and places should not be necessary for you, unless you are conducting a similar broad-based project.

Communications Network

A crucial aspect of any educational project is the communication process that is set up among the various levels of organizational involvement. In our project these levels included the funding agency, the sponsoring organization, the project staff, the site participants, and the site staff. Our objective was to work as collectively and nonhierarchically as possible. Given the variety of organizations involved, this objective was difficult to achieve. However, internally among the developers, and externally between our staff and site staff and participants, we were often able to develop relationships of sharing, mutual accountability, and consensus decision making.

Within our own group we held regular meetings to discuss monthly tasks, course content, teaching experiences, and community-based contacts. Informal meetings between the project staff and community co-workers proved valuable in setting up the project and in creating ongoing communication between our group and the staff at potential sites.

As "outsiders" coming into established groups and organizations, we found our on-site contacts to be crucial to the smooth functioning and success of the project. These liaison people provided essential information about the needs of the women participants. Each shared her concerns about the applicability of the project and facilitated the introduction of each course. Through ongoing evaluation of course content and instruction, they provided information about the effectiveness and relevance of the project. When site staff workers were not enthusiastic about our project or active in integrating it into their own, it was difficult for us to generate interest among potential participants.

In trying to make the project materials and the process of learning as relevant as possible to participants, we emphasized the importance of their direct input concerning course content. We generally found this input easier to obtain from adult women than adolescents, as the adult women were often less reticent to express their likes and dislikes in a group setting. It was also easier to establish a relationship of trust and mutual support with the adult women since many of us had shared similar life experiences and expectations.

At each site, regardless of our approach or previous contacts, the severe time constraints of the project were the major obstacle to achieving a close rapport with participants. Perhaps the most striking indication of both the strengths and the weaknesses of the project was the sense of sadness we all felt when each course ended. We all need to know more about ourselves and our history. We need to recognize and share our cultural differences, and learn from and support one another as a basis for mutual trust.

Sites

Our goal in selecting sites was that they reflect a range of women's life experiences and that they include a majority of poor, working-class, and Third World women. We chose a number of racially integrated high schools in working-class communities. The largest, an inner-city public school, had introduced women's studies courses in the past. Through its women's center, feminist speakers and groups are invited to talk with Third World and nonaffluent students. The alternative schools emphasize student-initiated programs. Staff members view their teaching roles as including those of counselor and advisor. A balance between course work and field experience allows students to find their own paths toward independence and responsibility. The fourth school, a private, residential, all-women's high school, provides individualized and specialized education for women considered to have emotional and behavioral problems adapting to the public school system. It provides a positive alternative to programs within the juvenile justice system. We also conducted the project at a women's prison and a residential community-based program for drug- and alcohol-dependent women and their children. The prison is a minimum security prison, although there are several maximum security sections within it. It has several vocational and educational programs, including a magazine written and designed by women inmates that gives them a voice for communicating their concerns. The community program provides residents with a confrontive yet supportive setting to deal with the social and individual causes of their addiction.

One of the basic assumptions of the program is that women turn to drugs and alcohol because they feel "out of control" of their lives. The program helps women to discriminate between those factors they cannot control -- racism, sexism, and classism, -- and those that they can, and to develop self-sufficiency through learning skills.

In each of these places, organizational structures and policies varied widely. Some variables affecting the way our courses were conducted included flexibility of time and location and the formality or casualness of the environment. Various problems were encountered in each setting, but the project proved to be successful and valuable for facilitators, site staff, and participants. Given our experiences with these diverse situations and groups, we feel this project is flexible and adaptable and can be modified for almost any educational setting.

Participant Needs

During the project we discovered many factors that resulted in wide differences in participants' needs. These included age, experience, race or ethnicity, the presence or absence of men in the workshops, current economic situation, and personal interests. High school women were often just beginning to explore the possibilities of career and life choices. They were sensitive to peer relationships, especially those with men. Their interests often focused on personal appearance, careers, marriage, and decision making. They had less personal experience and awareness than adult women of the difficulties faced by working women and mothers trying to succeed or survive in a discriminatory job market. High school women could explore ways to acquire needed job skills and to make life choices in the context of a seemingly wide range of possibilties. Many adult women needed to focus on issues such as how to retain or regain custody rights to their children, how to work while supporting a family, how to break a welfare, drug, or male dependency, and whether to have children. Women of all ages and races were familiar with the issues of violence against women, many having been abused themselves or having been from violent family situations. But Third World women had a particular set of concerns arising from their treatment as aliens by the dominant white culture. It may be obvious, but it is important to note that facilitators with ethnic, racial, and class backgrounds similar to participants often share a sensitivity and perspective that is important to women's support networks. This sharing is often more difficult to achieve in groups of diverse composition, but it is a goal worth working toward.

Evaluation

To assure that our concerns would be appropriate for the participants in each location, we built an ongoing evaluation into the project. In addition to using the input from site staff and participants, including written evaluation forms, we constantly asked self-evaluative questions about the changes we found necessary to make along the way. Because of our stress on flexibility and activity-oriented learning, allowing for changes in content and teaching style was integral to our presentations.

Teaching Methods

The approaches of the authors in presenting the course material ranged from traditional to radical. High school students accustomed to clearly defined teacher/student relationships and a highly structured routine generally did not respond well to loose, open-ended discussions. Rather, they seemed to prefer lecture-style learning and directed activities. Many, however, became more responsive when sessions were held in settings more casual than classrooms. Adult women who were accustomed to having intense group discussions about survival issues (e.g., those in prisons, crisis shelters, treatment programs) responded enthusiastically to provocative discussions, fantasy exercises, and role plays. They were very concerned with breaking down the distance between facilitators and themselves and insisted on everyone's equal participation.

The activities described in the courses are flexible and emphasize innovation and modification in their use. They are designed primarily to be experiential and do not rely heavily on reading and writing assignments. For inspiration, enjoyment, and stimulation, participants were asked to respond to media presentations or short class readings. As often as possible, however, they were drawn into active involvement in creating something: a piece of writing, an imagined situation, a vision of change, a relevant discussion. The most important idea stressed by the authors is that activities described are only one way of sharing the material. They should not be construed as the best or only way. Our main suggestion is: be creative!

Another important concept to keep in mind when presenting women's courses is that an ordinary classroom can be transformed into a feminist one. When a group of women come together to learn, sharing occurs that is absent from many educational situations. Women who begin to explore their common heritage and bonds as women also begin to make critical connections about their position in the society-at-large. These steps initiate the process of working toward personal and social change.

CONTENT

The courses described in this book have been developed around clearly stated goals and a set of underlying themes. Our selection of discussion topics, activities, and reading lists is exploratory in nature rather than instructional. Teachers and facilitators should use the descriptions to generate their own ideas, methods, and resources. An overview of the content and philosophy is described in the introduction to each course.

Given our thematic approach, a course can be presented in its entirety, divided into single workshops, or combined with others as a series of topical workshops or survey courses. The material can be organized around topics or themes. A course or workshop on Women and the Family, for example, can be constructed with material from all seven course descriptions. The same can be done for a discussion on the theme of women's rich cultural tradition. Material on women's history, literature, and work is included

in all course descriptions, not just the ones so titled. Concepts presented include those generally relevant to all women as well as those particular to individual groups (e.g., Black women, lesbians, working-class women.)

This book is a description of women's lives -- the richness and deprivation, strength and isolation, diversity and commonality that is our heritage. Within the limit of time and financial resources the authors have attempted to explore the complexities of women's experience. While each course focuses on some particular aspect of our lives, all deal with a range of topics, including mentors and role models, relationships, sexuality, and violence against women. An extensive list of themes can be culled from the materials as well. The following is a partial list for eliciting discussion around both negative and positive personal and social realities.

Reflections of our negative reality:

- isolation, invisibility, devaluation, and powerlessness;
- internalization of cultural values and acceptance of traditional roles;
- negative self-image and lack of individual identity;
- subordination within the dominant white, male, middle-class culture.

Reflections of our positive reality and potential:

- surviving and coping in a hostile world;
- finding nourishment in our achievement, skills, creativity, and supportiveness;
- valuing ourselves and gaining inspirations from other women;
- cherishing our oral and cultural traditions and discovering our own heroines;
- getting power for ourselves -- personally, economically, and politically;
- building visions of a just society;
- moving toward and actualizing change.

These suggestions are only a beginning. By examining our differences and commonalities, the myths that keep us powerless, and the ideas that empower us, we can move together toward maximum human development.

General Resources

Extensive bibliographies on various topics within women's studies are included with each course description. We offer the following general suggestions for varied perspectives on issues affecting women.

Periodicals and Journals

Local and national feminist newspapers, magazines, and journals are excellent resources for material by and about women. We have selected a sample of such publications from:

Chesman, Polly, Joan, and Andrea. Guide to Women's Publishing. Los Angeles: Dustbooks of California, 1978.

Aphra. Box 893, Ansonia Station, New York, N.Y. 10023. Published quarterly. A literary magazine balancing poetry and fiction with nonfiction articles on the arts, history, and other fields.

Atlantis. Box 294, Arcadia University, Wolfville, Nova Scotia, Canada. Published biannually. An interdisciplinary journal with critical and creative writing on all subjects related to women.

Black Maria. 815 W. Wrightwood Avenue, Chicago, Ill. 60614. Published quarterly. A politically oriented journal of women's literature and culture.

Chrysalis. 1727 North Spring Street, Los Angeles, Calif. 90012. Published quarterly. A journal emphasizing the diversity of women's culture in health, psychology, history, and politics.

Conditions. P.O. Box 56, Van Brunt Street, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11215. Published three times a year. A journal with literary and critical articles on women's and lesbian movements and institutions as well as women's issues involving race, class, and age.

Feminist Studies. 417 Riverside Drive, New York, N.Y. 10025. Published biannually. A journal focusing on women's history, literature, politics, and other issues related to women's status and condition.

Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies. Women's Studies Program, Hillside Court 104, University of Colorado, Boulder, Col. Published three times a year. A journal that bridges the gap between university and community women. Articles are included from a wide representation of women in the community.

Heresies. P.O. Box 766, Canal Street, New York, N.Y. 10013. Published quarterly. A journal of politics and art by a group of feminists with a Marxist and lesbian perspective.

Media Report to Women. 3306 Ross Place NW., Washington, DC 20008. Published monthly. A newspaper/journal for information, ideas and philosophy on women's press, news service, radio/TV, film, art, and graphics.

Ms. 370 Lexington Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017. Published monthly. A popular well-known magazine with news, art, fiction, poetry, and children's stories.

Quest: A Feminist Quarterly. P.O. Box 8843, Washington, D.C. 20003. Published quarterly. A journal with a good balance of feminist theory and well-researched articles about women's economic, social, and political issues.

Second Wave. Box 344, Cambridge A, Cambridge, Mass. 02134. Published quarterly. A political journal with many pages of women's poetry, fiction, book reviews, art, and socioeconomic analysis.

Signs: A Journal of Women in Culture and Society. University of Chicago Press, 11030 Langley Avenue, Chicago, Ill. 60638. Published quarterly. An interdisciplinary journal on women's research and critical analysis.

Sinister Wisdom. 3116 Country Club Drive, Charlotte, N.C. 28205. Published three times a year. A lesbian-feminist cultural journal with essays, history, fiction, poetry, and political and cultural analysis.

Women: A Journal of Liberation. 3028 Greenmount Avenue, Baltimore, Md. 21218. Published four times a year. A political-cultural journal with each issue focusing on a specific theme related to women of different races, ethnic groups, political beliefs, and lifestyles.

Women's Studies. Gorden and Breach, 1 Park Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10010. Published three times a year. A journal of research and criticism relating to literature, history, art, sociology, law, political science, economics, anthropology, and science.

Media

During the project year, two independent filmmakers produced corollary but separate media pieces (not funded by WEEA) used by several of the facilitators in their courses. The pieces expand upon various discussion topics raised in all the courses and can be purchased directly from the artists. The following are brief descriptions.

Vignette A: "Being a Woman and Everything..,"

In January of 1978 Patty Murphy, a lifelong resident of Boston, became a police officer. At age 32, almost ten years later than her average male counterpart, she is finding a life and work style suited to her needs. Married in her early twenties, Patty's aspirations focused exclusively on marriage and the family. One year later she was divorced. For the next several years she was employed as a clerical worker.

Patty's excitement about her present job and life activities reflects her great changes since adolescence. Through reminiscences over old pictures and live interviews, Patty describes her childhood interest in court trials, her feelings about herself as a "homely little kid," her assumptions about marriage as a young adult, and her growing awareness and self-confidence as she approaches her thirties.

The film focuses on a woman in a nontraditional work role. It portrays the complex social learning that encourages women to direct their energies toward the domestic sphere. It vividly illustrates women's doubts about their capacity for public life and contribution to society.

Patty's life experiences concretely illustrate female role training. Patty points out that women gain greater confidence in skills they already possess and can acquire new ones for greater personal satisfaction. The film is particularly appropriate for adolescents and young adults with similar experiences. Because it raises issues that touch on the lives of early adulthood, the film is applicable for adult women as well. The film is designed to accompany "Sex Roles and Socialization" and can be used with "Introduction to Women's History in the U.S." and "Women and Their Working Lives." The film was made possible in part by a grant from the Polaroid Foundation.

Projected to run approximately fifteen minutes, the film is available in color 1/2 or 3/4-inch video cassette or 1/2-inch reel-to-reel and is accompanied by a study guide. The guide is written by the filmmaker, who has taught American sociology and history in public schools for ten years. Information about the purchase and rental of the film and guide can be obtained through:

Carol R. Frenier
P.O. Box 111
Manchester, Mass. 01944

Vignette B: Saundra Graham

Saundra Graham is a young, divorced mother of five children. In 1968 her husband left the family when the children were very young, forcing Saundra to take two jobs to make ends meet. Six months later Saundra was hospitalized for exhaustion and went on welfare. While regaining her strength, she became involved with people in her neighborhood who were trying to improve the local school system. Although Saundra was politically inexperienced, she was very angry about the inadequate education Black children were receiving in her community. She became actively involved in Black community affairs and eventually became the leader of her neighborhood organization. In 1970, with the support of her community, her mother, and a large number of students, Saundra ran successfully for city council. Four years later she ran for State representative and won. Today she holds both the council and the representative seats. She is respected for her work in housing and is considered the foremost spokesperson for rent control and the needs of working-class and elderly people in her community.

In this videotape, Saundra tells us how she dealt with the difficult emotional decisions she made as a single mother in order to pursue her career. We learn how frightened Saundra was at the thought of running for public office. We witness her strong feelings about her own mother, who offered Saundra emotional support for her decision to run for office and who helped in caring for Saundra's children during the campaign. Although today Saundra is a strong woman, she is also a person who experiences moments of loneliness and depression. She sometimes wonders why she has chosen a rewarding but difficult career in the political arena, which has historically been a "man's world."

Saundra's life can best be described as inspirational. It is a story of one woman's successful struggle against personal and political odds. We recommend it for any adult community group. It is particularly relevant to women who are beginning a career in midlife, women who have little or no training, women who are involved in jobs that have previously been closed to them, Black women, single parents, women on welfare, and women comtemplating divorce.

Information about the purchase and rental of the thirty-minute black and white videotape can be obtained through:

Carol Doyle Van Valkenburgh
Black Iris Cinema
24 Leonard Avenue
Cambridge, Mass. 02139

Black Women Writers

BARBARA SMITH has taught courses on Black women writers and Black women's studies since 1973 at various schools, including Emerson College, the University of Massachusetts/Boston, Connecticut College, and the Blackstone Community School in Boston. She has published many reviews and articles in Black and feminist publications, including Ms., Second Wave, and Conditions. She is coeditor with Gloria T. Hull and Patricia Bell Scott of the book Black Women's Studies, forthcoming from the Feminist Press in 1979.

Black Women Writers

Black Women Writers is a six-hour curriculum designed for adolescent and adult women in nontraditional educational settings. It was developed from an explicitly Black feminist perspective. Issues of sexual and racial politics are explored, as are unquestioned assumptions about Black women's roles in an oppressive society. Black feminism means a pro-Black woman perspective that is antiracist, antisexist, anticapitalist, and anti-heterosexist. The course was presented with the understanding that sexual oppression has just as real an impact upon the lives of Black women as does racism, and that both must be struggled against if Black women are going to be free. Familiarity and experience with Black literature, as well as an active commitment to the goals of feminism, influenced the form and content of the materials and teaching. For those less familiar with this perspective, a bibliography is provided for background reading on feminism and Black literature.

GOALS/OBJECTIVES

Black women's literature is a subject about which most people know very little or nothing. In general, courses about Black women writers are not taught at any level of the educational system, whether primary, secondary, or at the universities. Neither are these writers integrated into other courses where they logically belong, particularly those encompassing American, Afro-American and women's literature. Not only aren't Black women writers taught, but they also do not get the critical and scholarly attention that assures that their work will become a recognizable part of the culture. The entrenched racism and sexism of the society as a whole, and the white male cultural chauvinism that is the logical result, are the reasons for this exclusion.

Given the widespread lack of information about Black women writers and about Black women's experience generally, a single course can only scratch the surface of this area. Yet, this kind of course will also provide vital new information to participants, whatever their sex and race.

The basic goals of this six-week course on Black women writers are:

1. To acquaint students with the existence of Black women writers; i.e., their names, when they wrote, the genres they wrote in, their major works. Most Americans do not know that Black women writers exist, so just to provide a list of names is a major educational function.

2. To connect the content of this particular body of literature to the content and experience of the course participants' own lives.

3. To introduce ways of analyzing literature to think about its meaning and, in the process, to improve course participants' critical skills.

4. To motivate course participants' interest in Black women writers so that they will want to read more about them on their own.

The first two goals are of primary importance. Because of the nature of American education, most people do not know who Black women writers are. Introducing these artists is essential, especially when course participants are Black women who can empathize with these writers through shared identity and experience. Knowing about these writers not only provides information on an intellectual level but also provides an important affirmation of self for Black women on an emotional, cultural, and political level. If one is a Black female and has been taught that the only persons capable of creating literature are white men, Black men, or white women, it is of course extremely demoralizing to one's self-image. One doubts one's own intellectual capacities if one never sees anyone like oneself doing intellectual work. The affirmative emotional, cultural, and political impact that identity-specific cultural materials can have has already been illustrated through shared culture in the Black and women's movements.

The writing of Black women is vital, honest, and vivid, which makes it involving and interesting. English literature as it is taught in schools and colleges is notoriously dull because it does not touch on the life experiences of the students reading it. White male experience is actually the experience of a minority, and yet it is the literature of upper-class white men that is constantly taught. It is alienating because it describes an alien, foreign experience. It is made to be difficult to read to preserve the elitism of literary study. It is dull because the language is stilted, unimaginative, and remote; e.g., Milton, Dryden, Donne, Eliot, Pound.

Black women's literature is valuable both for participants and facilitators. It provides a primary, firsthand source for learning about Black women's hidden lives, because it presents a point of view in which the contradictions of racial and sexual politics are constantly being exposed and questioned. Black women writers constantly criticize the systems of racial and sexual oppression that destroy their own and their sisters' lives. Black women writers almost always focus upon Black female experience, which is ignored by other writers. Presenting this kind of material in institutions such as prisons or ghetto high schools that themselves embody the oppression that Black people, women, and Black women face makes a great deal of sense. The actual situation of the participants illustrates the truth of the writing.

There are many themes specific to Black women's writing. Some general issues that are raised by Black women writers are: how to survive and sometimes thrive in a totally hostile environment; Black women's autonomy and independence; the inextricable connnections among racial, sexual, and class oppression; Black women's self-images in a white male-dominated world; the problem of self-hatred; tensions between Black and white women;

tensions between Black women and men, specifically sexual oppression within the Black community; family relationships; and positive bonding between Black women. For additional themes and topics, see the introduction to Black-Eyed Susans, edited by Mary Helen Washington, and "Doing Research on Black American Women," by Barbara Smith. Full citations appear in the Resource section.

There are also aesthetic and cultural elements basic to the literature; e.g., the use of particularly Black female language and imagery. There are touchstones of Black female experience that surface over and over again in Black women writers' works, such as religious expression, spirituality, knowledge of healing, and cooking and eating as ritual and celebration.

This course does not use a topical approach. Rather, discussions center around readings from which certain themes evolve. A collection of short stories, Black-Eyed Susans: Classic Stories by and about Black Women, and selected poems were used.

METHODOLOGY

The following material is meant to suggest what someone facilitating a course on Black women writers might do. Presenting literature is not like teaching grammar or math. There are no right or wrong answers, just the kinds of questions one can raise about the materials. An impression that first you must ask a certain question and only then does another specific question follow, or that you must read a certain passage aloud at a certain moment, is totally inaccurate. In presenting Black women's literature all you have to do is read it thoroughly and be prepared to talk about it. My classes are discussions or guided conversations. Of course, there is no way to know in advance what any group of people is going to think or say about something that they've read. It is also impossible to replicate what happens in a session. What follows, then, in only a fraction of what can be done in the course. The readings are not the only readings possible for a course on Black women writers, but merely the ones that were used. They were chosen for their accessibility to women with varying levels of reading skill. I don't suggest that anyone try to duplicate exactly the course as described, but that they use the ideas and particularly the bibliographies as a starting point to create their own.

This course was presented in six one-hour sessions, but it can be either lengthened or shortened to conform to the time available to each facilitator. The amount of reading would be determined accordingly.

The course was presented at two sites, a high school in the center of Boston's Black community and a co-ed but primarily women's minimum security prison. The students at the high school were taking a women's literature course of which the Black Women Writers course was a six-week unit. There were approximately twenty-five students in the class. Attendance varied from week to week. Most of the students were Afro-American women. There were several

Hispanic women and several white women. There was one Black male student and one white male student. Most of the students were poor or working class. The regular teacher for the course remained in class on the days I taught and helped a great deal with discussions and assignments. Because of the ages of the students (mostly high school juniors and seniors), and the fact that we were in a fairly conventional school setting, discussions were not as deep as with the women in the prison. I felt that I "lectured" more in the high school because discussion was more difficult.

At the prison, the participants were Black women and one white woman who ranged in age from about eighteen to the late fifties. A Black male attended class twice. Several of the women were from the South. They were used to having educational programs in prison that were skill-oriented, but not necessarily accustomed to talking about issues in class that touched their lives. Participants often remarked that the material was "true" for them. The course provided a space for expressing feelings about the participants' current situation and about what had happened to them in the past. A lot of discussion touched on what was happening to them at the present time. It was possible to be more informal and open at the prison than at the high school, and to discuss things in a more explicitly political way.

Readings and discussions comprise the basic methodology for conveying material in this course. Although some outside class readings can be assigned, reading aloud was usually done in class by both participants and facilitator. Summarizing the plot of a short story and reading important passages can begin lively discussions, particularly when participants' life experiences connect them to the subject matter of the stories. Reading aloud also encourages them to get interested and read the stories on their own.

RESOURCES

The following resources can be used to acquaint participants with the existence of Black women writers, to connect the literature to the participants' own lives, and to encourage analysis of the literature and further interest in Black women writers. I try to tell participants as much as possible about Black women writers whose work is not read in class. A thematic listing of books by Black women, "Doing Research on Black American Women," can be useful to distribute to participants. At the prison, I asked each woman to choose a book from this list, which I then purchased for her to keep. Passing around pictures of Black women writers and your own copies of books, reading aloud from interviews and critical articles about Black women writers, and viewing filmstrips about writers such as poet-novelist Margaret Walker all make the writers more real to participants.

The book Black-Eyed Susans was chosen because it is a collection of short fiction. Assigning a novel seemed unrealistic, given the course's short duration and the limited amount of time participants had for reading. This book was also chosen because the stories are grouped by themes and there is a useful, explanatory introduction.

Poems were also read in class, grouped together by their focus upon a common theme. Blues lyrics -- "sung poems" -- were read and compared with written poems. Since the success of any literature course depends upon sharing a body of reading, I found that short works allowed more flexibility than long ones since they could be read aloud in class.

The following materials are the resources used for this course.

Fiction

Washington, Mary Helen, ed. Black-Eyed Susans: Classic Stories by and about Black Women. Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor, 1975. (includes a selected bibliography)

Poetry Group I

Brooks, Gwendolyn. "We Real Cool." Selected Poems. New York: Harper & Row, 1963, p. 73.

Cox, Ida. "Wild Women Blues." The World Split Open: Four Centuries of Women Poets in England and America. Edited by Louise Bernikow. New York: Vintage Books, 1974, pp. 278-279.

Harper, Frances E. W. "A Double Standard." The World Split Open: Four Centuries of Women Poets in England and America, op. cit., pp. 212-214.

_____. "The Slave Auction." The Poetry of the Negro, 1746-1970. Edited by Langston Hughes and Arna Bontemps. Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor, 1970, p.14.

Nelson, Alice Dunbar. "I Sit and Sew." The World Split Open: Four Centuries of Women Poets in England and America, op. cit., pp. 260-261.

Smith, Bessie. "Dirty No Gooder Blues." The World Split Open: Four Centuries of Women Poets in England and America, op. cit., pp. 276-277.

Poetry Group II

Clifton, Lucille. "The Way It Was." Good News about the Earth. New York: Random House, 1972, p. 3.

Evans, Mari. "I Am a Black Woman." I Am a Black Woman. New York: William Morrow, 1970, pp. 11-12.

Giovanni, Nikki. "Nikki-Rosa." I Hear My Sisters Singing. Edited by Carol Konek and Dorothy Walters. New York: Crowell, 1976, pp. 8-9.

Lorde, Audre. "Naturally." The New York Head Shop and Museum. Detroit: Broadside, 1974, p. 35.

Oden, Gloria. "The Way It Is." I Hear My Sisters Singing, op. cit., pp. 9-11.

Walker, Alice. "Women." Revolutionary Petunias and Other Poems. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973, p. 5.

Poetry Group III

Jordan, June. "I Must Become a Menace to My Enemies." Things I Do in the Dark. New York: Random House, 1977, pp. 144-146.

Rodgers, Carolyn. "U Name This One." How I Got Ovah. Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor, 1975, p. 26.

Shakur, Assata. "What Is Left?" Heresies: A Feminist Publication on Art and Politics 1 (1977): 101.

Additional poetry was sometimes read aloud from books I brought to class.

Stories, Articles, Films

Hurston, Zora Neale. "Sweat." Black American Literature: Essays, Poetry, Fiction, Drama. Edited by Darwin T. Turner. Columbus, Ohio: Merrill, 1970.

Smith, Bessie. "Washwoman's Blues" and "Get It, Bring It, and Put It Right Here." "Slave Codes and Liner Notes," by Michelle Russell. The Radical Teacher, No. 4 (1977), pp. 1-6.

Walker, Alice. "In Search of Our Mother's Gardens." Ms. 2 (May 1974).

_____. "Interview." Interviews with Black Writers. Edited by John O'Brien. New York: Liveright, 1973, pp. 185-211.

The filmstrip "Profiles of Black Achievement" on Margaret Walker was shown in both classes. It is available from Guidance Associates, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York, 1973.

General Resources

The following books and articles will also be useful to anyone teaching Black Women Writers. These works provide Black feminist political theory, Black feminist literary criticism of Black women writers, historical background, and bibliography. To teach effectively in a new field, background information is necessary. Merely reading the books assigned for a particular session will not fully equip a facilitator for this course. These are basic works to deepen the thinking of the course facilitators.

The Combahee River Collective. "A Black Feminist Statement." Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism. Edited by Zillah Eisenstein. New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1978.

The Common Women Collective. "Black Women." Women in U.S. History: An Annotated Bibliography. Cambridge, 1976. Available c/o Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant Street, Cambridge, Mass. 02139. $2.00 + $.45 postage.

Hull, Gloria T. "Black Women Poets from Wheatley to Walker." Negro American Literature Forum 9 (fall 1975): 91-96.

_____. "Rewriting Afro-American Literature: A Case for Black Women Writers." The Radical Teacher, No. 6 (1977). pp.10-14. Available from P.O. Box 102, Kendall Square P.O., Cambridge, Mass. 02142.

Hull, Gloria T., Patricia Bell Scott, and Barbara Smith, eds. Black Women's Studies. Old Westbury, N.Y.: The Feminist Press, 1979. Will include articles, bibliographies, and syllabuses extremely useful to teachers of Black women's literature.

Lerner, Gerda, ed. Black Women in White America: A Documentary History. New York: Vintage Books, 1972.

O'Brien, John, ed. Interviews with Black Writers. New York: Liveright, 1973. Contains interviews with Ann Petry and Alice Walker.

Russell, Michele. "Black-Eyed Blues Connection." Women's Studies Newsletter 4 (fall 1976), 5 (winter/spring 1977).

_____. "Slave Codes and Liner Notes." The Radical Teacher, No. 4 (1977), pp. 1-6. An excellent article on five Black women singers.

Smith, Barbara. "Doing Research on Black American Women: Or All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, but Some of Us Are Brave." Women's Studies Newsletter 4 (spring 1976). Reprinted in The Radical Teacher, No. 3 (1976) Thematic reading list.

Smith, Barbara. "Toward a Black Feminist Criticism." Conditions: Two 1 (October 1977): 25-44.

Turner, Darwin T. Afro-American Writers. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, (Goldentree Bibliography), 1970.

Walker, Alice. "In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens." Ms. 2 (May 1974):

Williams, Ora. American Black Women in the Arts and Social Sciences: A Bibliographic Survey. Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1973. An extremely valuable work; also includes photographs of Black women writers.

Women and Literature Collective. Women and Literature: An Annotated Bibliography of Women Writers. 3rd ed., 1976. Available from Box 441, Cambridge, Mass. 02138.

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CONTENT

SESSION 1: Introduction to Black Women Writers

Goal: To introduce participants to Black women writers and the problems they face as artists.

Activity. Ask participants to name Black women writers. Talk about why they probably know more names of white male writers. Discuss how racism and sexism have influenced what they have been taught and allowed to learn. Pass around pictures of Black women writers and describe who they are. Read this quote by Alice Walker about the position of Black women writers and discuss Walker's meaning:

> Interviewer: Why do you think that the black woman writer has been so ignored in America? Does she have even more difficulty than the black male writer, who perhaps has just begun to gain recognition?
>
> Walker: There are two reasons why the black woman writer is not taken as seriously as the black male writer. One is that she's a woman. Critics seem unusually ill-equipped to intelligently discuss and analyze the works of black women. Generally, they do not even make the attempt; they prefer, rather, to talk about the lives of black women writers, not about what they write. And, since black women writers are not, it would seem, very likable -- until recently they were the least willing worshippers of male supremacy -- comments about them tend to be cruel. [From Interviews with Black Writers, edited by John O'Brien, p. 201.]

Activity. Distribute Poetry Group I. Read the poems aloud. Give participants background information about the poets. All these poems, except Gwendolyn Brooks' "We Real Cool," were chosen because they raise issues of sexual as well as racial politics. They also introduce some early Black women writers and blues singers with whom participants are probably not familiar. Discuss Harper's "A Double Standard." The poem concerns a woman who becomes an outcast because she has been sexually involved with a man, who of course maintains his status. Harper writes:

> No golden weights can turn the scale
> Of justice in His sight;
> And what is wrong in woman's life
> In Man's cannot be right.

In the high school class, the term "double standard" had to be explained to students. At first they were interpreting this poem solely in racial terms; the sexual dynamics had to be pointed out. Talk about the poem's old-fashioned language and style and the Victorian morality that Frances E. W. Harper, a Black woman and feminist, questioned. Read Harper's "The Slave Auction." Discuss what identifies it as a Black female poem; i.e., the fact that it focuses on a typical event from slavery from a Black female point of view. Read other poems and discuss them in the same manner.

Read blues lyrics by Bessie Smith and Ida Cox. The high school students particularly appreciated these, especially Bessie Smith's "Get It, Bring It, and Put It Right Here." This is an assertive statement of a woman's right to expect financial support and cooperation from her man. The high school students had recently been talking about issues of economic independence in their women's literature class. The song complemented this material. They also liked the humorous language in Smith's lyrics. You might talk about the differences between the language in the written poems and the song lyrics from around the same period. Point out how racism usually forces Black women artists into music instead of other aspects of the arts because of the denial of literacy and education. Read the following quote from Alice Walker's "In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens."

> What did it mean for a Black woman to be an artist in our grandmothers' time? In our great-grandmothers' day? It is a question with an answer cruel enough to stop the blood.
>
> Did you have a genius of a great-great-grandmother who died under some ignorant and depraved white overseer's lash? Or was she required to bake biscuits for a lazy backwater tramp, when she cried out in her soul to paint watercolors of sunsets, or the rain falling on the green and peaceful pasturelands? Or was her body broken and forced to bear children (who were more often than not sold away from her) -- eight, ten, fifteen, twenty children -- when her one joy was the thought of modeling heroic figures of Rebellion, in stone or clay?
>
> How was the creativity of the Black woman kept alive, year after year and century after century, when for most of the years Black people have been in America, it was a punishable crime for a Black person to read or write? And the freedom to paint, to sculpt, to expand the mind with action, did not exist. Consider, if you can bear to imagine it, what might have been the result if singing, too, had been forbidden by law. Listen to the voices of Bessie Smith, Billie Holiday, Nina Simone, Roberta Flack, and Aretha Franklin, among others, and imagine those voices muzzled for life. Then you may begin to comprehend the lives of our "crazy," "Sainted" mothers and grandmothers.

Questions/Issues. The following questions can be used to facilitate discussion about Poetry Group I. They are also the kinds of questions that can be applied to other reading materials.

- What makes these poems Black?
- What makes them female?
- What identifies them as being by Black women?
- Is there still a double standard for men and women?
- What are the differences between the written poems and the sung poems?
- Are inequalities between the sexes the theme of both?
- Look up the meanings of words you don't know.

You might ask the participants to keep a journal as a way to connect them to the writings without the intimidation of an essay or another kind of writing assignment. These are the kinds of questions participants might answer in their journals.

- How did what you read make you feel?
- Is this woman a good writer? What kind of style does she use?
- Has anything like what she writes about ever happened to you?
- Do you know any people like the characters she describes?
- What tells you that this is written by a Black woman?
- Include your reactions to the class discussions too.

SESSION 2: Discussion of "Frankie Mae" and Poetry Group II: The Intersection of Race, Sex, and Class

Goals: To examine the intersection of race, sex, and class in Black women's lives.

To help women gain analytical reading skills.

Activity. Assign the story "Frankie Mae" in Black-Eyed Susans. "Frankie Mae" is a classic story of Black female oppression, oppression that invades even childhood. What comes across most strongly in this story is that Frankie Mae's destruction and fate is not the result solely of her race, sex, or class, but the devastating result of all three. Practically every event in the story points to this triple oppression. For example, on page 7 of the story, Frankie Mae's father expresses sympathy for the pregnant Black women who can't keep up in the fields. They are doing that work because they are poor and Black. Because they are women they can be impregnated, and their sexual-physical identity makes their work harder and makes it more likely that they will be denied work, a vicious circle.

What follows are the notes I used to present the story and an account of the session at the prison in which the story was discussed. I try to show that Black women write about reality and not about abstractions. Their works are not fantasies or "mere stories."

Notes: "Frankie Mae" by Jean Wheeler Smith

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xiv Frankie Mae's suffering will not be changed by the Civil Rights or other Black movements, because she is as much a victim of sexual oppression as she is of racial oppression.

4 "He wanted most to cushion her life." Her father wants to protect Frankie Mae. What are his chances of being able to do that as a poor Black man?

7 "The only hard part was in keeping after the women whose time was about to come. He hated to see them dragging to the field, their bellies about to burst." Point out sympathy from a Black man for a Black woman's sexual oppression.

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8 Mr. White, Jr.'s demand that Frankie Mae work is like slavery.

10 What does it mean that Frankie Mae always has to recover from disappointed hopes, that her capacity to recover is seen by her father as a gift?

12 Every gift that Frankie Mae has is damaged.

Racial/sexual/economic oppression are inextricably connected in this story.

14 A white man thinks nothing of killing a Black child merely for disagreeing with him. What does this show about the supposed respect that men show to women and children?

15 "Long as you live, bitch, I'm gonna be right and you gonna be wrong. Now get your black ass outta here." This sentence epitomizes the relationship of white men and their institutionalized rule to Black women. Black women will always be "wrong" as long as white males make the definitions.

16 "When she was fifteen, and in the fourth grade, she had her first child. After that, there was no more thought of school. In the following four years she had three more children." The total unconsciousness with which teenage pregnancy is accepted -- this is the death of a spirit.

"She died giving birth to her fifth child." Her death is the result of her race, class, and sex. It would be difficult to determine which was the most decisive factor. This is an archetypal Black woman's death.

What about contraception? The fact that it was totally unavailable to Frankie Mae and her mother and the women working in the fields shows how Black women's lives in this society are worth absolutely nothing to those who rule. Pregnancy is a given. This story makes me angry. How did the story make you feel and why? How is race a factor in oppression? Sex? Class? How do they all function together?

Activity. Distribute Poetry Group II. All the poems in Poetry Group II were chosen because they deal with Black women's statements about identity and with hostile definitions by outsiders. Here is an example of Gloria Oden's vivid writing in "The Way It Is."

Brown as I am, she is browner
Walnut
like the satin leaves of the oak
that fallen overwinter in woods
where night comes quickly
and whose wind-peaked piles
deepen the shadows of
such seizure.

The poems "Nikki-Rosa" by Nikki Giovanni and "The Way It Is" by Gloria Oden deal with Black women's definitions of themselves versus the assessment of the white world. Tha Black-white dichotomy intensified in one prison session when there were no white women present. The anger in these poems brought up the anger in the women. The group talked about how the white world cannot imagine that we are happy or that we have feelings at all. They do everything possible to beat us down and cannot imagine why we survive. We talked a lot about spirit.

After reading Lucille Clifton's "The Way It Was," we discussed how greasing our legs was imposed on us for our acceptance as Black ladies. Point out that cultural values and definitions of beauty, and acceptance in a sexist and racist society, are not necessarily what we should strive for. One way to bring home this message is to read some passages concerning physical beauty from the introduction to Black-Eyed Susans. We have been made to feel that we can't ever attain actual beauty, we can just hope to be passable. During this session, women shared how they felt about themselves physically.

Questions/Issues. The following description of one of my sessions may give others a sense of the range and intensity of feelings and thoughts that can emerge when using this material. As with all the suggested readings in this course, it is important for a facilitator to think about what kinds of questions and issues she would like to raise, given the participants she is working with.

An older woman at the prison told us some stories from her own life that mirrored the experience of this story. She had been a tenant farmer in the South, and the white male who owned the farm insulted some Black teenaged boys who had stopped to rest from picking cotton. The next day all the workers left, because as she said, "slavery times were over." She also told us about how her own son had learned to hate white people because when he was four years old, his grandmother, her mother, was murdered by a fifteen-year-old white boy while she was standing in her own yard.

The mood of the class got angrier and angrier. We talked about our feelings, and I said that we needed to figure out how to use our anger to make changes. One woman talked about all the hassles she had experienced trying to be released. I wanted to end with more positive feelings, so I read Alice Walker's "Women" and then talked about the kind of women who had raised me. (I'm not sure this worked. I may have been serving my own need to feel more comfortable, more than the class's.) We had talked earlier about education and the whole question of literacy, the denial of it, and the power that it represents.

Our discussions were sometimes painfully ironic, considering that we were sitting in a prison, where the question of rights is really problematic. The woman who had talked about her hassles getting out asked, "Do they know what you're teaching here?" I said I always taught this way. It was a maddening, sad, dynamic, and beautiful experience. It was, I think, creative, radical teaching.

SESSION 3: Our Self-Images as Black Women in a Hostile Society

Goal: To critically examine the sources of images of Black women.

Activity: Use Poetry Group II. Read the following quotation from an early Black woman poet, Anne Spencer, written in 1927.

> Mother Nature, February, forty-five years ago forced me on the stage that I, in turn, might assume the role of lonely child, happy wife, perplexed mother -- and, so far, a twice resentful grandmother. I have no academic honors, nor lodge regalia. I am a Christian by intention, a Methodist by inheritance, and a Baptist by marriage. I write about some of the things I love. But have no civilized articulation for the things I hate. I proudly love being a Negro woman -- it's so involved and interesting. We are the PROBLEM -- the great national game of TABOO. [From Gloria T. Hull's "Black Women Poets from Wheatley to Walker," p. 93.]

Discuss Spencer's personality as it comes across in this quotation. To me she is imaginative, does not uncritically accept female roles, religious, strong-minded, outspoken, self-loving, and visionary. She spoke positively about Black female identity in an era when it was largely overlooked. A woman at the prison asked when the statement was written because of the use of the word "Negro." I pointed out that this kind of analytical reading is what it means to be a critic. Anne Spencer was conscious of and positive about being a Black woman at a time when most people viewed both identities negatively. We talked about the meaning of the word "taboo," particularly in this context. One participant defined taboo as "don't touch." I tried to explain why Black women were both touchable and untouchable. Black women have been the victims of sexual violence and exploitation ever since we were brought here and therefore have not actually been taboo. On the other hand, we have been legally taboo for marriage and as respectable sexual partners. In other words, we have not been taboo when it comes to rape, prostitution, and coercion, but very taboo when it comes to sanctioned voluntary heterosexual relationships. Being viewed as sexual chattel, of course, has had great impact upon our self-images, since we are viewed by both white males and females as "whores."

Questions/Issues. Using Poetry Group II, open a discussion of Black women's physical self-images.

- Who decides what a Black woman's life means?
- Who decides in each poem if a Black woman is beautiful? White men, white women, Black men, Black women? How often does the Black woman determine her own self-image?
- Is outer image more important than inner self? How do the two relate?
- Is image more important than basic issues of survival? See Audre Lorde's "Naturally."
- How important is physical beauty?
- Do expectations about physical beauty control men's lives the way these expectations control ours? Is this fair?

In teaching adolescents, discussions of self-image and physical appearance are often difficult given their concern for fitting in with peer group norms. Discussion is also difficult when the group is not all Black women. I tried to get the high school students to think about these issues critically. I shared with them my experience getting an Afro in the late 1960's and how I witnessed in my own life changing values about physical beauty.

SESSION 4: Self-Images as Black Women

Goal: To critically examine the sources of images of Black women.

Activity. Discuss "The Coming of Maureen Peal" and "If You're Light and Have Long Hair" from Black-Eyed Susans. Focus on how attitudes about white beauty are imposed upon us from outside. For example, in these passages, the authors point to the pain and confusion of women competing with women, and to the standardization of white beauty as a way to control Black women's self-images:

> We were sinking under the wisdom, accuracy, and relevance of Maureen's last words. If she was cute -- and if anything could be believed, she was -- then we were not. And what did that mean? We were lesser. Nicer, brighter, but still lesser. Dolls we could destroy, but we could not destroy the honey voices of parents and aunts, the obedience in the eyes of our peers, the slippery light in the eyes of our teachers when they encountered the Maureen Peals of the world. What was the secret? What did we lack? Why was it important? And so what? Guileless and without vanity, we were still in love with ourselves then. We felt comfortable in our skins, enjoyed the news that our senses released to us, admired our dirt, cultivated our scars, and could not comprehend this unworthiness. Jealousy we understood and thought natural -- a desire to have what somebody else had; but envy was a strange, new feeling for us. And all the time we knew that Maureen Peal was not the Enemy and not worthy of such intense hatred. The Thing to fear was the Thing that made her beautiful, and not us. [From "The Coming of Maureen Peal" by Toni Morrison, pp. 34-35.]
>
> '...It oughta be that simple. Then I could lick it. It oughta be that easy. But it's my color that makes him mad. I try to shut my eyes to that, but it's no good. What I am inside, what is really me, he likes okay. But he keeps looking at my color, which is like a wall. He has to jump over it in order to meet and touch what I've got for him. He has to jump away up high in order to see it. He gets awful tired of all that jumping.'
>
> [Maud Martha then thinks about confronting the light-skinned woman her husband has been dancing with, but realizes that it's hopeless.]
>
> But if the root was sour what business did she have up there hacking at a leaf? [From "If You're Light and Have Long Hair" by Gwendolyn Brooks, pp. 41-42.]

The "Thing" and the "root" are both metaphors for the same phenomenon: racist, white male standards of beauty imposed upon Black women. Discuss the fact that this theme shows up frequently in Black women's writing.

Questions/Issues. The facilitator should think of ways to elicit discussion on the themes most pertinent to the participants. During this session at the prison the women shared their childhood experiences that related to the stories. The discussion of self-image in the context of a prison was particularly heavy and ironic. I stressed having pride in self and other kinds of self-love. These were concepts that the women were familiar with because of the Black pride, Black power rhetoric of the 1960's. But I also tried to promote a positive self-image from a strong Black feminist perspective.

SESSION 5: Images of Family, Work, and Relationships

Goal: To explore images of family, work, and relationships in Black women's lives through different genres.

Activity. Read Zora Neale Hurston's "Sweat" aloud to the class. Talk about how the story is written in Black folk idiom. You might point out that the main character of this story, who is a washerwoman, has much in common with the woman in Bessie Smith's "Washwoman Blues."

Questions/Issues. Participants responded positively to the language and humor conveyed in the folk idiom of Hurston's work. The following is an example of Hurston's writing.

> She seized the iron skillet from the stove and struck a defensive pose, which act surprised him greatly, coming from her. It cowed him and he did not strike her as he usually did.
>
> "Naw you won't," she panted, "that ole snaggle-toothed black woman you runnin' with aint comin' heah to pile up on mah sweat and blood. You aint paid for nothin' on this place, and Ah'm gointer stay right heah till Ah'm toted out foot foremost." [From "Sweat," by Zora Neale Hurston, appearing in Afro-American Writers, Darwin Turner, p. 342.]

Talk about the oppressiveness of marriage that the story describes, and about the issue of battering. It is important to point out the way in which Hurston's characters take a strong stance against abusing women. In comparing this story to Bessie Smith's "Washwoman Blues," you might discuss the different levels of effectiveness of two different genres in exploring a similar theme. One might explore how the feeling and texture of the story "Sweat," given Hurston's use of Black folk language, is close to the feeling and texture of Smith's classic blues. Both make clear the economic necessity for Black women to do this back-breaking, ill-paying labor. Both Hurston and Smith make their central character a poor, Black woman who would be peripheral or nonexistent in a work written by a white male.

SESSION 6: Relationships of Oppression and Resistance

Goal: To examine Black female experiences in mother/daughter relationships and in resistance to oppression.

Activity. Read Alice Walker's "Everyday Use" from Black-Eyed Susans to the class. The story focuses on the conflict between a mother and daughter. It contrasts traditional, Black folk values with modern, supposedly progressive values. Physical self-image, the feeling of both mother and daughter of not fitting in, is also a component of the tale.

Questions/Issues. Exploring the themes and issues raised by Alice Walker might lead to a discussion of the ways in which female culture or "crafts" bind women of different generations together. In this particular story the art form is quilt making. Participants could share their own experiences with the women in their family. Oral interviews of family members expose a wealth of material. I also suggest discussing the differences between folk art and "high" art. The people who do the former tend to be poor, nonwhite, and female. Those who do the latter tend to be well-off, white, and male. The question in this discussion, as in any discussion of the value of the Black female experience, is whether Black women have any determination of the social values placed on their experiences or cultural contributions.

Activity. Show the sound filmstrip on Margaret Walker. Read the poems from Group III.

Questions/Issues. In using this material, talk about the kind of person Margaret Walker was and the difficulties she faced as a Black woman writer. Discuss the fact that she could never write full time because of child bearing and child raising responsibilities and having to provide financially for her family. In my classes, participants were motivated to read Walker's novel Jubilee on their own after viewing the filmstrip.

The poems in Group III have been chosen because they articulate Black women's resistance to their oppression and their basic revolutionary spirit. At the prison, women particularly related to Assata Shakur's poem, since she is also imprisoned.

SUMMARY

Facilitators need to think about presenting the ideas and practices of feminism in this curriculum to women in "nontraditional" settings, and to women who are simultaneously oppressed by class and race. The feminist vision of fundamental social change is applicable to all women. But it is important that ethnic and economic identity be taken into account, that one not proceed with the assumption that all women's experiences are the same. A course on Black women writers which incorporates this consciousness about identity is an excellent means of communicating new ways of thinking about the lives of all women.

Introduction to Women's History in the U.S.

ELIZABETH C. BOUVIER has been active in the women's liberation movement since 1972. She has taught courses on U.S. women's history, women's labor history, and oral history in the greater Boston area since 1973. She is coauthor of Women in U.S. History: An Annotated Bibliography, published by the Common Women Collective, 1976.

CHRIS CZERNIK has been involved in the women's movement since 1971. A feminist historian, she has taught courses and facilitated workshops on U.S. women's history for four years, and is an author of Women in U.S. History: An Annotated Bibliography, published by the Common Women Collective in 1976. She is deeply committed to reclaiming and demystifying women's history, and to challenging the sexist, racist, classist, and homophobic attitudes that pervade materials we study.

Introduction to Women's History in the U.S.

We hope the following description of a short-term, introductory course on women's history in the U.S. will be helpful to people interested in facilitating such a course. It can be used by those who have had no previous experience with women's history as well as those who have. The difference will be in the amount of groundwork you as the facilitator need before the course begins. To help with that groundwork, we have included a general but extensive bibliography in the Resource section of this course description.

This course was designed as a basic introduction to women's history for people who have had little or no exposure to it. A feminist perspective was maintained throughout, a perspective that is anti-sexist, does not view women's history as an appendage to male history, and does not concern itself solely with exceptional, notable women. It demands that the histories of women from diverse racial and class backgrounds be included.

Women's history in the U.S. has traditionally been withheld and neglected. Very few of our elementary, high school, and college textbooks mention women; even less do they specifically discuss our history. What we have received instead is grossly distorted information: information that is almost always about men's lives and experiences, such as wars, positions of power, success stories, or paternalism. These men are almost always white and do not represent the "common" man. They are men like George Washington, General MacArthur, and Daniel Boone.

When women are included in history it is as an appendage -- a famous man's wife (Abigail Adams) or a "notable" woman (Jane Addams), notable as defined by male values. Women are not appreciated from a woman's point of view or from a feminist perspective. This appendage approach is usually practiced by men who do not recognize women's experiences as significant. More often than not, a sexist attitude is perpetuated by perceiving women in relation to the values, ideologies, and interpretations of male culture, and by seeing us as inferiors.

The fact is that women have an incredibly rich and exciting history. Generally, we have not managed preindustrial, small town businesses, been allowed to live as equal members in a white-controlled society, fought on the front lines during wartime, or been given equal pay in workplaces. In many instances we were scorned or invisible because we weren't married. But, we have always been present and active, and we continue to be so. We have done and continue to do unpaid housework and child care while spouses earn money at their work/business. Slave women preserved a culture and resisted racial genocide in a white, racist society. During wartime women were involved in protest or spy work and cared for wounded men. For over a hundred years women have held strikes for equal pay. And, many women have lived full, rich, and satisfying lives because they have chosen not to marry men, but rather to remain independent or share their lives with other women.

Women's history is a powerful and integral part of every aspect of history. We comprise a large segment of society and have always been active in its social, economic, and political systems. Our history is complex and limitless. It includes information about every life experience of all women.

GOALS/OBJECTIVES

The value in sharing information about women's history is great. As a consciousness-raising tool it is one way to help us take control of our lives. For example, as contemporary paid workers we may realize that in comparison to male co-workers we receive unequal pay. Learning about women's history will tell us that we have always received unequal pay. We have been angry about this and have loudly protested the injustice. All-women strikes were waged as far back as the early 1800's and have occurred ever since. Some have been successful, some not. These women were aware of the exploitations and injustices imposed by a male-dominated society and actively challenged them.

In learning about our history we can make associations and identify with various aspects of women's past lives and circumstances. Our contemporary experience is no longer seen as a unique situation. Rather, it is part of a historical process. This identification can help us break through our isolation and feel tremendous support. This relevance to our lives encourages strength to effect personal and social/political change. It is a way of taking control of our lives.

The goals of this particular course are:

to acquaint participants with the existence of a vast and rich women's history;

to look at this history within a feminist framework and, by so doing, to develop critical and analytical skills in accordance with feminist values;

to familiarize participants with some historical information, including information that speaks directly to their life experiences; and

to encourage participants to explore women's history beyond this course.

Given the time restrictions of the course, the subject matter is necessarily limited. However, the course includes sessions on defining women's history, women's oral history, neglected women, and women and work.

Various themes and issues we hope will emerge from the material are:

an appreciation of women's history;

an understanding of the complexity of our history, especially in relation to class and racial issues;

the value of women's oral traditions;

women's paid and unpaid work;

women's oppression;

women's survival, independence, creativity, and achievement.

METHODOLOGY

This course is divided into six sessions of one to one and one-half hours each.* These can be combined into three sessions of two to three hours each. The course was offered at and adapted for a private, all-women's high school and a community program for drug- and alcohol-dependent adult women and their children.

The success of this course largely depends on the participants' active involvement in learning new information -- information that addresses their experiences and meets their needs. Consequently, one of the facilitator's primary responsibilities is to design a course that helps create an atmosphere where maximum learning will occur. The choices of both teaching style and content material are fundamental to development of a successful course design. It is crucial that the facilitator be acquainted with and sensitive to the participants' life experiences, situations, and learning levels. For example, it would be alienating and destructive to choose materials with academic jargon for participants who haven't had sufficient experience with that writing style, who dislike it, or who are just being introduced to new subject matter. Likewise, to choose a rigid lecture teaching style when a group is small enough to engage in participatory discussion and analysis would be defeating. In other words, if the course isn't relevant, if participants aren't excited by the material or comfortable with the teaching style, it will be difficult for them to learn.

Limited by the duration and introductory nature of the course, the selected materials are short and basic. They are nonalienating, appropriate for this learning level, and make women's history come alive. They are not only intellectually stimulating, but also allow for emotional/experiential identification. Much of their content includes information on or reference to people of different class and racial backgrounds. To illustrate these selection criteria, a brief description and evaluation of one of the resources follows. Other materials are annotated in the Resource section.

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*Seven sessions are described here because the same ones were not used at each site.

Marcy Fink's "Women in History Books: The Case of the Missing Sex" is one of the best fundamental articles on this subject to date. Written by a high school student, this short (four-page), easily readable, and succinct essay provides a basic overview and analysis of the status of women's history. It pinpoints numerous issues and themes crucial for any beginning discussion of women's history. These include: how women and our history are omitted from history books; why that is so; when we are included, how we are included; how women are portrayed in illustrations; acknowledgment of the more frequent neglect of Black, Hispanic, Native American, and, we might add, lesbian, and poor white women; and the sexist language used in history books. The author then goes on to provide concrete examples from history books that demonstrate these points.

This article was particularly useful during our first session. Whether used as a preparation assignment, group reading, or summary handout, it provides a synopsis of the issues discussed during this session. Most importantly, it meets all selection criteria: it is basic, short, nonalienating, appropriate for this learning level, intellectually stimulating, and provides for emotional/experiential identification. Reference to the life experiences of women from diverse class and racial backgrounds is included, and it makes women's history come alive!

Introduction to Women's History in the U.S. was presented to two quite different groups of women. Yet obvious similarities were that both groups had little or no exposure to and wanted to learn about women's history, and that all participants were female. One group, composed of adult, former drug- or alcohol-dependent women, lived with their children in a residential community program. The group was small (7 to 13 members), racial and ethnic backgrounds varied, and most, if not all, participants were from poor or working-class situations. The setting was clearly informal and nonacademic, and most of the women did not have college or possibly high school backgrounds. Female high school students ranging in age from 14 to 18 formed the other group. Members of this small group (four to five participants) were from various white working-class or middle-class ethnic backgrounds. This was an unusual high school group, however, in that during the week they boarded at the school, having been referred by local and State agencies under Title IX. (Title IX identifies them as adolescents with behavior problems, unable to adjust to the public school system.) These women registered for this course as a regular school elective, in partial fulfillment of their social studies requirement. Their course was composed of two parts: 1) Introduction to Women's History in the U.S., facilitated by us; and 2) The Contemporary Women's Movement, facilitated by their regular social studies teacher. Students were graded and had to adhere to the same disciplinary and academic requirements as in other school courses. That is, attendance, tardiness, class participation, homework assignments, and tests all were evaluated in determining a final grade.

We modified our teaching style and use of materials only slightly for each of the two sites. Basically, the teaching style warranted group discussion of readings, audiovisual media, and brief overview presentations. Readings were assigned in advance to the high school participants, whereas they were read aloud with the community program residents. Since the adult women were not in

a formal academic setting and were more involved with demands of daily survival, they had little or no time for preparatory class work. The high school group expected outside assignments. Course sessions and discussions noticeably varied between these two groups and consequently, required different input and responsibility from the facilitators. The high school group demanded a tighter structure and more assistance to keep discussions focused on themes that emerged from the assignments or presentations. Discussions were more spontaneous, free flowing, and easily focused in the community program group. However, we had to be more sensitive to dynamics that occurred in this group's living situation, for these often affected the course sessions. The situation demanded more flexibility in session plans and structure.

In addition to having structural distinctions, the groups responded differently to essentially the same content material. Each group had different life experiences. Differing racial, ethnic, and class composition undoubtedly prompted different interests and responses. For example, a theme that consistently emerged from materials presented in both sites was women's independence. The high school women's immediate concerns focused mostly on a career and then marriage, or a healthy balance between career and marriage. The community program group had more experience with these issues and was much more concerned with basic survival and work issues. These mostly Third World women were much more aware of and able to discuss freely the issue of racial discrimination in survival and work situations.

Another topic that prompted different responses was women's oral history. Alex Haley's account, "My Furthest Back Person: The African," describes his experience and motivation in researching and writing Roots. The community program group more quickly recognized and appreciated the value of oral tradition, perhaps because it is an integral part of their life experience. The high school women did not demonstrate this attitude as spontaneously. They needed more exposure to and discussion of oral history before they could appreciate its value and recognize the part it played in their lives.

Finally, our role as "outsiders" at both sites was a very important concern in presenting this course. It required that we become acquainted with and sensitive to the participants' lives. Not only is this crucial in establishing trust, but it is also helpful in determining participants' needs in relation to the course. If you are an "outside" facilitator, you must understand what is intrusive or exploitative. A staff person from each site worked with us throughout the course. In addition to joining in information-gathering sessions, these staff members met with us before each of the sessions and also participated. They provided one of the most valuable links in bridging the gap between "outsiders" and an established group. The sensitivity with which you should approach a group, particularly if you are an "outsider," cannot be overemphasized.

RESOURCES

Materials Used in This Course

Fink, Marcy. "Women in History Books: The Case of the Missing Sex," 1976, pp. 22-25. Available from Youth Liberation, 2007 Washtenaw Avenue, Ann Arbor, Mich. 48104. An excellent, readable summary about women in history books written by a high school student.

Froines, Ann. Women's Work Is Never Done. Available from New England Free Press, 60 Union Square, Somerville, Mass. 02143. A short, 12-page dramatic reading on the history of working women in the U.S. Enjoyable graphics are included.

Gluck, Sherna. "On Doing Oral History." Harvest Quarterly, October-December 1976. A short article that discusses women's oral history and describes interviews conducted with women.

Haley, Alex. "My Furthest Back Person: The African." Underfoot, by David Weitzmann. New York: Charles Scribner & Sons, 1976, pp. 28-29. An excellent, inspiring account of the oral tradition that motivated Haley to research and write Roots.

Merriam, Eve, ed. Growing Up Female: Ten Lives. New York: Doubleday and Co., 1971. A collection of the lives of ten women dating from 1783 to 1960. The women are from different backgrounds and speak in their own voices. Very readable.

Schene, Carol. "Herstory: A Crossword Puzzle on Women." Boston Public Library, 1975. An enjoyable activity that measures one's familiarity with women of the past.

The Woman's Film. 1971. 40 minutes, black and white. Available from California Newsreel, 630 Natoma Street, San Francisco, Calif. 94103. A moving film in which a Chicana, a Black woman, and a working-class white woman discuss the realities of their lives.

Additional Resources

General History

Ahlum, Carol, and Jacqueline Fralley, eds. High School Feminist Studies. Introduction by Florence Howe. Old Westbury, N.Y.: The Feminist Press, 1976. An invaluable resource for becoming familiar with and developing high school women's studies courses.

Banner, Lois. Women in Modern America: A Brief History. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976. Examines history of women in the U.S. from 1890 to the present.

Baxandall, Gordon and Reverby, eds. America's Working Women: A Documentary History, 1600 to the Present. New York: Vintage Paperback/Random House, 1977. An important work.

Beard, Mary, ed. America through Women's Eyes. New York: Greenwood Press, 1976, (1933). Written by a historian of pioneer women, this is an important work on the role women played in U.S. history.

Botein, Stephen, et al, eds. Experiments in History Teaching. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard-Danforth Center for Teaching and Learning, 1977. A sketchy but down-to-earth guide.

Common Women Collective. Women in U.S. History: An Annotated Bibliography. Cambridge, Mass.: 1976. Available c/o 186 Hampshire St., Cambridge, Mass. 02139. $2.45. The only generally available bibliography of its kind.

Cott, Nancy, ed. Root of Bitterness. New York: Dutton and Co., 1972. A provocative collection of primary source documents concerning the history of U.S. women.

Flexner, Eleanor. Century of Struggle: The Women's Rights Movement in the United States. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1975 (revised edition). A contemporary work that adequately covers specific aspects of a "century of struggle," dating from about 1800 to 1920.

Kraditor, Aileen, ed. Up from the Pedestal. New York: Quadrangle Books, 1970. Selected primary source writings on the history of feminism in the U.S. from 1642 to 1966.

Lerner, Gerda. The Woman in American History. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1971. A short, manageable book on U.S. women's history.

Rossi, Alice S., ed. The Feminist Papers: From Adams to de Beauvoir. New York: Bantam Books, 1973. A collection of feminist writings dating from the 1770's (Abigail Adams) to the 1950's (Simone de Beauvoir).

San Francisco Women's History Group. What Have Women Done? A Photo Essay on Working Women in the U.S. San Francisco: United Front Press, 1976. A well-done photographic contribution to women's history.

Sochen, June. Herstory: A Woman's View of American History. New York: Alfred Publishing Co., 1974. A good but sketchy overview of women's history in the U.S. from 1600 to 1973.

Oral History[1]

A. Teacher Background Materials

Baum, Willa. Oral History for the Local Historical Society. Second ed., rev. Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1974. $3.00. Order from the Association, 1400 Eighth Avenue South, Nashville, Tenn. 37203. This booklet describes oral history and its function, tells how to set up an oral history program, and details every necessary step from the interview through the deposit and preservation of tapes. It is an easily read document.

Feichtinger, Kristine. "You Never Hear about Any Struggles." Oral History in the Classroom: A Guidebook. Chicago: Illinois Labor History Society, 600 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Ill. 60605. An excellent, stimulating guidebook for uses of oral history in the high school classroom, but certainly applicable to other situations. It is particularly helpful as a facilitator's aid in the construction of oral history interviews and projects. Content includes and introduction, background notes, teacher orientation, classroom applications, interview preparation and execution role play, developing the interview format, additional considerations, tape recorder workshop, final interview notes), evaluation, related projects, and a source list.

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[1] Katz, Elizabeth. Sources of Strength: Women and Culture Annotated Bibliography. Developed by Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development, San Francisco, Calif. Newton, Mass.: Educational Development Center, 1979, pages 154-162. Used by permission.

Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies. "Women's Oral History" (issue), vol. 2 (summer 1977). Available from Women's Studies Program, Hillside Court 104, University of Colorado, Boulder, Colo. 80309. The only comprehensive publication we know of devoted entirely to women's oral history. Content includes: Listen! Women Speaking; What's So Special about Women? Women's Oral History; Doing Oral History as an Outsider; Oral History as a Biographical Tool; Family History and Oral History; and a Women's Oral History Resource Section -- interview guides, release forms, selected bibliography, and projects and collections. Other articles speak about Italian, Jewish and Slavic grandmothers; a trade union organizer; mothers and daughters on the Alberta frontier; Black women and their communities in Colorado; Chinese women immigrants on Angel Island; Southern women; and suffragist Alice Paul's memoirs.

Garner, Van Hastings. Oral History: A New Experience in Learning. Dayton, Ohio: Pflaum Publishing, 1975. This book is directed to anyone who wants to start an oral history project, especially in a classroom situation. It is written in a conversational style, and chronicles the development of such a class at a state university in New Jersey. Garner's description of the mistakes they made and solutions they found to problems will help others who attempt a similar task. Each chapter ends with an excerpt from an interview; the interviews are multicultural from a range of historical eras, and are conducted with four women and two men. There is a bibliography at the end.

Grele, Ronald, ed. Envelopes of Sound: Six Practitioners Discuss the Method, Theory and Practice of Oral History and Oral Testimony. New York: Precedent, 1975. $7.50. Cassette of panel discussion, $13.95. In the process of discussion, this book summarizes much of the current debate over oral history and oral testimony.

Moss, William. Oral History Program Manual. New York: Praeger, 1974. This is a sound and scholarly book. The program described is too ambitious in scope and financing for most projects, but is nonetheless useful for its guidelines.

Neuenschwander, John. Oral History as a Teaching Approach. Washington, D.C.: National Education Association, 1976. $2.00. Order from the Association Order Department, Academic Building, Sawmill Road, West Haven, Conn. 06516. "It is the purpose of this report to offer teachers from the middle grades through college a brief handbook on the use of oral history in teaching. Oral history should be viewed as a means to improve student motivation by injecting the community into the learning process.... A complete sample of an oral history is included in this report. It gives practical, effective guidelines for classroom teachers, and it details suggested subjects to cover in interviews." (Frontispiece)

"No More Moanin': Voices of Southern Struggle." Southern Exposure 1 (winter 1974). Contains a good bibliography at the end.

Roddy, Joseph. "Oral History: Soundings from the Sony Age." Rockefeller Foundation Illustrated, Vol. 3 (May 1977): 9-11. A brief but adequate overview of oral history.

Stewart, John. "Oral History Is Beyond the Stage of Talking." New York Times, May 22, 1977. A brief, adequate, traditional overview.

Wigginton, Eliot, ed. The Foxfire Book, no. 1-3. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1972-1975. All three Foxfire books are compilations of oral histories of people who live in the Appalachian Mountains in Georgia. Students from the Rabun Gap-Nacoochee School recorded the conversations with their relatives and neighbors. The project began in

1966 in Wigginton's class, and is now a student-run magazine with readers in every state. Wigginton has edited and written an introduction for each of the Foxfire anthologies. Teachers will find these helpful, and some selections can be used in student activities.

Wigginton, Eliot. Moments: The Foxfire Experience. Washington, D.C.: IDEAS, 1975. This book describes what the Foxfire project and resulting oral history books are all about, "a sort of teacher's guide for helping students in getting the greatest personal growth from collecting local oral history and producing the Foxfire magazine... Wigginton's (book) is a gentle sermon on the process and pitfalls ahead for teachers intriqued by the promise of 'Foxfire'... He ambles deftly from the intangibles of teaching -- student responsiveness, self-esteem, involvement -- to the day-to-day details that affect them." (Review by Daniel Mack, Harvard Educational Review, August 1976, pp. 478-479.)

B. Student Learning Materials

Barnett, Don, and Rick Sterling, eds. Bobbi Lee: Indian Rebel. Richmond, B.C.: LSM Press, 1975. $1.95. Order from LSM Information Center, P.O. Box 94338, Richmond, B.C., Canada V64 2A8. "This is the personal account of the first twenty years in the life of a Canadian Indian woman. For those who wish to better understand what it is like to be Indian in North America, or why millions of Indians, Blacks and Chicanos wind up in dead-end lives, drunk in alleyways or strung out on "junk" in big city ghettos, or why political organizations aiming for national liberation and socialism are rising up among these internally colonized peoples, this story is a revealing document." (From the introduction.) There is strong language in Bobbi Lee's account and many details of her life are harsh; teachers should use their judgment about the appropriateness of assigning this in their particular school.

Davis, Margaret, ed. Life as We Have Never Known It, by Co-operative Women. New York: W.W. Norton, 1975. This book is a firsthand record of working-class women's experiences in early twentieth-century England. Some of the entries are "Memories of seventy years," "A plate-layer's wife," "In a mining village." The women write about growing up in poverty, going to work, and becoming politically active in the Women's Co-operative Guild movement.

Gluck, Sherna, ed. From Parlor to Prison: Five American Suffragists Talk about Their Lives. New York: Vintage Books, 1976. This book is based on oral history interviews with five women who were involved in the women's suffrage movement in the early 20th century of the U.S. All the women are white, and each has a different perspective: there is a Greenwich Village radical, a Midwestern activist in the movement for birth control clinics, a politically committed newspaperwoman, a federal lobbyist, and an advertising executive and clubwoman. The chapters range from 30 to 65 pages in length.

Kahn, Kathy, ed. Hillbilly Women. New York: Avon, 1972. "They live in the towns and hamlets of southern Appalachia. They are the women of the coal-mine camps and mill towns; they are members of a fiercely proud sisterhood. For in spite of enormous abuse from mine and mill operators, welfare agencies, corrupt union officials and their gun thugs, these women remain undaunted. Hillbilly Women tells their stories in their own words--

sometimes angry, sometimes tender, always compelling and direct." (Book jacket.) Photographs. Appendix lists grassroots organizations and publications in southern Appalachia with comments on them.

Linderman, Frank. Pretty-Shield: Medicine Woman of the Crows. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1972. (Original title, Red Mother, 1932.) This is an oral history of an old Crow woman sho told her story in Crow and by signs to Frank Linderman in 1932. The dialogue is direct and her account describes the life of this plains Indian tribe before the white man arrived in Montana, and the changes that occurred when the buffalo were killed off for their hides. Pretty-Shield also explains Crow traditions and the role of women during her narrative.

Lurie, Nancy, ed. Mountain Wolf-Woman, Sister of Crashing Thjnder: The Autobiography of a Winnebago Indian. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor Paperbacks, 1966. Mountain Wolf-Woman is a Winnebago Indian who has told the story of her life to her adopted kinswoman, Nancy Lurie. She tells briefly of her girlhood and her family, describes her marriages, her children, and her grandchildren. We suggested that students could read either Appendix A or the main autobiography. Appendix A is a short version (8 pages) of her life story, told at one sitting. In the main body of the book (83 pages), Mountain Wolf-Woman expands and adds events to her original autobiography.

Seifer, Nancy. Nobody Speaks for Me! Self-Portraits of American Working Class Women. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1976. This book is a compilation of oral histories of ten working-class women, "self-portraits of leaders, activists, doers in their communities around the country, women who are challenging the tired conventional stereotypes... While their personal circumstances, jobs, neighborhoods, and ethnic backgrounds vary dramatically, each has struggled with concrete issues affecting her life and emerged a fighter... Their attitudes, life-styles, and growing awareness... reveal the enormous potential of American women to change their lives and their country." (Book jacket.)

"Rosalinda Rodriguez," pp. 298-343: Rosa Rodriquez describes her life from the time she was born in 1948 in Cotulla, Texas through her election to the City Council in 1972. Some of the influences on her decisions are her Chicano culture, her mother, and her husband. Included in this chapter is a discussion by Rosa's husband, Roy, about the political party they belong to and his supportive view of her involvement in politics. The entire chapter can be assigned, or excerpts can easily be selected.

Walker, Margaret. How I Wrote Jubilee. Chicago: Third World Press, 1972. Compare Margaret Walker's experience in writing Jubilee with Alex Haley's account of writing Roots. Both were motivated by information they learned through oral history tradition.

Wigginton, Eliot, ed. Foxfire 3. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1975. Successor to Foxfire 1 and 2: "animal care, banjos and dulcimers, hide tanning...and still more affairs of plain living." (Book jacket.) Probably the best-known high school oral history project in America. Illustrations, photographs, and people and subject indices.

"Beulah Perry," pp. 398-415: She describes her ancestors, her parents, and growing up in the country, and talks about how the world has changed since she was a child.

Wigginton, Eliot, ed. I Wish I Could Give My Son a Wild Raccoon. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1976. This book is a collection of forty narrative interviews done by students in communities throughout the country. It was created as a celebration of the Bicentennial; its goal was stated by Wigginton in the solicitation letter he sent to adults who worked with students on Foxfire-type projects. "This book...will be an opportunity for our grandparents to speak their piece from their own special perspective. A forum where men and women from every culture can come together to express, through their grandchildren, their hopes and fears for us as a nation, and their dreams for us as a world." (page 13.)

Wilson, Gilbert L. "Waheenee: An Indian Girl's Story Told by Herself." North Dakota History: Journal of the Northern Plains 38 (winter/spring 1971). $2.50. Available from the State Historical Society of North Dakota, Liberty Memorial Building, Bismarck, N.D. 58501. This oral history was published in 1921 and has been republished in its entirety by the North Dakota State Historical Society. Gilbert Wilson was a minister who talked with a woman of the Hidatsa (a Sioux tribe) named Waheenee-wea, or Buffalo-Bird Woman, in 1908, and put her stories into a book. One fascinating aspect of Waheenee's account is her description of a way of life that is long vanished: buffalo hunts, attacks from other tribes, the building and care of lodges, moving camp, and marriage customs. Waheenee also describes the different training and duties of women and men. Even as she speaks to Wilson in 1908, she says "I am an old woman now. The buffaloes and black-tail deer are gone and our Indian ways are almost gone. Sometimes I find it hard to believe that I ever lived them." The writing of this account is somewhat stilted in the style of 1908, and therefore could be moderately difficult for some students. The book is divided into chapters ("A Little Indian Girl," "Kinship," "Clan Cousins," "Marriage," "A Buffalo Hunt") that could be assigned alone.

C. Audiovisuals: Films

An Old-Fashioned Woman. 1974. Martha Coolidge. Color. 49 minutes. $36 rental. From University of California Extension Media Center, Berkeley, Calif. 94720. "Portrait ot 87-year-old Mabel Tilton Coolidge, filmed be ber granddaughter Martha Coolidge. A self-assured woman, Mabel Coolidge graciously shares her memories of a contented upper-class New England life including college at Smith, marriage to a man who became Lt. Governor of Massachusetts, and motherhood. Although her own goals were predetermined, she appreciates how different and complex today's world has become and feels that young people face difficult choices. A member of the DAR, she embraces tradition, but is also open to change. The film can be used to stimulate discussion about roots, tradition, and change." (Artel and Wengraf, Positive images, p. 79.)

Foxfire. 1974. Color. 21 minutes. Available on 16mm film or videocassettes. $35 rental. From McGraw-Hill Films, 1221 Avenue of the Americas, New York, 10020. "Foxfire takes you deep into the hills to explore the old ways of plain people... As the camera explores the techniques of recording oral history, writing, designing, and running a magazine... the Foxfire staff and local residents explain their project." (McGraw-Hill promotional brochure.)

Union Maids. Julia Reichert, James Klein, Miles Mogulescu. Black and white. 48 minutes. $55 rental (plus $5 handling). From New Day Films. P.O. Box 315, Franklin Lakes, N.J. 07417. "Three women in their 60's--Sylvia,

Kate and Stella--tell the way things really were back in the days when people risked their jobs and lives to organize trade unions. They are the stars of Union Maids, a vivid slice of almost forgotten American history... What is especially moving is the way the film provides a quietly hopeful sense of our continuity with the past and future." (San Francisco Chronicle, quoted in New Day Films publicity brochure.)

D. Bibliographies

Baum, Willa. "Oral History," History News 31 (June 1976). An annotated bibliography selected for use by local historical agencies and libraries, it does not emphasize the production or use of oral history as a teaching method or for academic research. A number of valuable readings have been left out because they appeared in journals or books that are available only in major libraries. Arranged by: how-to-do-it manuals, tape recorders and tapes, legal aspects, oral history in general, catalogs of oral history programs, journals and books illustrating the use of oral history. A brief but useful guide for teachers, despite her disclaimer.

Grele, Ronald, and Gaile Grele. Oral History: An Annotated Bibliography. 1974. Microfiche, $0.76; hardcover, $1.58. From ERIC. Ed 102 618. Constructed to introduce the newcomer to the variety and complexity of the problems of oral history, this selective, annotated bibliography includes: basic articles or texts in related fields important to oral history field work, works with extensive bibliographies, works not covered in earlier and available bibliographies (except those significant in current debates), and a few works based on oral history interviews. Entries are listed under four headings: general background, books, articles, and books using oral history.

Meckler, Alan, and Ruth McMullin, comps. Oral History Collections. New York: R.R. Bowker Company, 1975. This index provides access to the combined collections of some 400 oral history centers housing recordings or transcripts of interviews with more than 2700 persons. The index is arranged in two parts: a name and subject index, and a list of American and foreign oral history centers. Name and subject entries include speaker's name, title, number of pages if interview is transcribed, name of collection in which interview is included, conditions for use, language of interview, name and location of oral history center, and cross-reference to other interviews.

Waserman, Manfred, comp. Bibliography on Oral History, Rev. ed. New York: Oral History Association, 1975. $3.00. Order from the OHA, P.O. Box 13734, North Texas State University, Denton, Tex. 76203. Over 300 annotated citations for essays, articles, and speeches on oral history published from 1953 to 1974. Eight oral history collection catalogs and 37 books incorporating oral history materials are included. Subject index.

Because of time limitations, we were unable to annotate the following works. However, they are all good resources that introduce or cover the specified topics.

Southern Women

"Generations: Women in the South" (issue). Southern Exposure 4 (winter 1977).

Kahn, Kathy. Hillbilly Women. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Co., 1973.

These Are Our Lives. As told by the people and written by members of the Federal Writers' Project of the Works Progress Administration in North Carolina, Tennessee, and Georgia. New York: W.W. Norton, 1939.

Ullman, Doris. The Appalachian Photographs of Doris Ullman. Penland, N.C.: The Jargon Society, 1971.

Chicanas

Longauex y Vasquez, Enriqueta. "The Mexican American Women." Sisterhood Is Powerful. Edited by Robin Morgan. New York: Vintage Books, 1970.

Lorenzana, Noemi. "La Chicana: Transcending the Old and Carving Out a New Life and Self-Image." De Colores: Journal of Emerging Raza Philosophies 2 (1975).

Sanchez, Rosaura, and Rosa Martinez Cruz, eds. Essays on La Mujer. Los Angeles: Chicano Studies Center Publications, 1977.

Sutherland, Elizabeth. "Colonized Women: The Chicana, an Introduction," Sisterhood Is Powerful. Edited by Robin Morgan. New York: Vintage Books, 1970.

Zinn, Maxine Baca. "Chicanas: Power and Control in the Domestic Sphere." De Colores: Journal of Emerging Raza Philosophies 2 (1975).

Bibliographic resources are available from the following organizations:

Pajarito Publications
2633 Granite N.W.
Albuquerque, N.M. 87104

Chicano Studies Center Publications
University of California
405 Hilgard Avenue
Los Angeles, Calif. 90024

Native American Women

Landes, Ruth. The Ojibwa Woman. New York: W.W. Norton, 1971.

Lurie, Nancy. Mountain Wolf-Woman. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1973.

Niethammer, Carolyn. Daughters of the Earth: The Lives and Legends of American Indian Women. New York: Macmillan Co., 1977.

Pearce, Roy. "A Melancholy Fact: The Indian in American Life." The Indian in American Life. Edited by Francis Paul Prucha. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1971.

Lesbians

Cook, Blanche W. "Female Support Networks and Political Activism: Lillian Wald, Crystal Eastman, Emma Goldman." Chrysalis, no. 3 (1977).

Foster, Jeannette. Sex-Variant Women in Literature. Oakland, Calif: Diana Press, 1975.

Katz, Jonathan. Gay American History: Lesbians and Gay Men in the U.S.A. New York: Macmillan-Crowell, 1976.
Klaich, Dolores. Woman Plus Woman. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1976.
Martin, Del, and Phyllis Lyon. Lesbian/Woman. New York: Bantam Books, 1972.
Miller, Isabelle. Patience and Sarah. New York: Fawcett Publications, 1973.
Smith-Rosenberg, Carroll. "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between Women in 19th Century America." Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society 1 (autumn 1975).

Black Women

Bert, James Loewenberg, and Ruth Bogin. Black Women in 19th Century American Life. "Women, Blacks, and History" (introduction). University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1976.
Cade, Tony, ed. The Black Woman: An Anthology. New York: Signet, 1970.
Lerner, Gerda, ed. Black Woman in White America. New York: Vintage Books, 1972.
Smith, Barbara. "Doing Research on Black American Women." The Radical Teacher, November 1976.

Immigrant Women

Baum, Charlotte, Paula Hyman, and Sonya Michel. The Jewish Woman in America. New York: New American Library, 1977.
Seller, Maxine. "Beyond the Stereotype: A New Look at the Immigrant Woman, 1800-1924." The Journal of Ethnic Studies 3 (spring 1975).

Asian Women

Kingston, Maxine Hong. The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood among Ghosts. New York: Vintage Books, 1977.

Films

Ain't I a Woman? A History of Women in the U.S. from 1600 to the Present. Mary Findlay-Fastabend, Deidre O'Mara-Delaney, Leona Pollack, 1979. A concise 15-minute overview of U.S. women's history in slide/tape format, showing how women of all races and classes have contributed to our history. Information about the purchase and rental of the slide show and teacher's guide can be obtained through Deidre Delaney, P.O. Box 730, Boston, Mass. 02102.
Anything You Want to Be. Available from New Day Films, Box 315, Franklin Lakes, N.J. 07417
Betty Tells Her Story. New Day Films.
The Emerging Woman. Film Images. Check your library for address.
Union Maids. New Day Films.

Cherie Jimenez/CPF

CONTENT

SESSION 1: Introduction to Women's History in the U.S.
(Presented at both sites)

Goals: To acquaint participants with the existence of women's history.

To establish a feminist framework for the course.

The following activity serves as a catalyst to involve the entire group in the process of defining history in general and women's history in particular.

Activity. Ask participants to describe their attitudes about learning history and what they recall having learned about women's history. Responses to the first part of the question were varied at both the community program and the high school. Some women recalled excitement about learning history; others, indifference; and still others, boredom.

Questions/Issues. Group discussion should help pinpoint biases in most traditional history learning. Some of these biases are:

dates and events such as wars and presidencies usually receive most attention;

the lives and experiences of ordinary people are seldom included;

the histories of nonwhite people are ignored;

women's lives and activities are neglected.

Generally, history is a subject that has been controlled and written about by white, middle-class men who view their lives and experiences as the only aspect of history worth learning.

Activity. Once some of the biases of traditional history have been acknowledged, focus the discussion more specifically on women's history. Refer to participant responses to the first activity for this discussion. Most participants at both sites concluded that they knew little about women's history because of its omission from educational textbooks. However, the high school women were much more aware of the existence of women's history, although they had learned little about it. Women in the community program were not conscious of its existence. At both sites, participants remembered having learned about only a few famous women such as Betsy Ross, Clara Barton, Jane Addams, and Martha Washington.

Questions/Issues. During a more in-depth exploration of the reasons for the omission of women's history, keep the following points in mind:

- How are women excluded from recorded history?

  As Marcy Fink's article points out, "The typical U.S. history textbook devotes one out of its 500 to 800 pages to women, their lives, and their contributions" (p. 22). When reference does occur, it is usually in a narrow, restricted manner. Often women are mentioned as an afterthought -- an appendage of an important man, or a notable woman.

- Why are women excluded from recorded history?

  Our lives and activities are not as valued as men's. This is simply a reflection of the treatment and attitudes toward women in society. Also, women have largely been excluded from the process of recording and writing history.

Activity. Distribute Marcy Fink's article. It can be read aloud in class or used by participants as a reference that summarizes many of the points discussed during this class. It can also be used as assigned reading for the second session.

Activity. At this point it is important to shift the discussion to a more positive note. You can do this by indicating that women have a rich history that can be traced to precolonial times, and that our history is an integral part of the broader history.

Questions/Issues. For discussion purposes, keep the following points in mind and provide examples wherever possible.

1. Women's history is a process that includes everything about all women's lives.

2. The forms that we can draw upon to learn about women's history include historical documents, diaries, journals, letters, autobiographies, biographies, novels, oral traditions, folklore, photographs, clothing, quilts, needlepoint, music, and art.

3. Our history is not exclusively a history of white, middle-class, notable women, or women active in the suffrage movement, or members of organizations such as the Women's Trade Union League. Rather, our history is all-encompassing and includes the life experiences of Black, Hispanic, and Asian women, lesbians, and poor, working, immigrant, and middle-class women.

4. Life experiences range from paid and unpaid work to other kinds of struggles for survival and independence. We can experience these issues as mothers, nonmothers, daughters, factory workers, poets, musicians, carpenters, night office cleaners, farmers, and "leisure-time ladies."

5. Identifying with our history and viewing it as a process, not as isolated incidents, gives us strength. This strength can help us promote personal and social/political change.

Summary of Session. This first and crucial session provides the foundation for the entire course. Women's history is introduced to the participants, and a feminist framework from which to explore it should be clearly established.

SESSION 2: Women's Oral History
(Presented at both sites)

Goal: To familiarize participants with the concept and value of oral history and its special place in women's history.

Oral history was or is the only form for passing on information about peoples' lives and experiences in both ancient and contemporary times. Folklorists and anthropologists have recognized its value for some time. More recently, people have come to appreciate oral tradition or "storytelling" as a crucial source of recorded history -- family history, Black history, and women's history.

The significance of oral tradition in women's history cannot be overemphasized. Women have the strongest and most visible oral tradition in our society. We have verbally shared healing remedies, treasured recipes, family stories, secrets, songs, and other life experiences with each other. Too often this information has been seen as unimportant because it isn't written down. We have been conditioned to view our "women's gossip," our experience, as worthless. But we are recognizing that our history is valuable and that our oral traditions are an integral part of that history. We must preserve our "storytelling" through hand-written or tape-recorded interviews with ourselves, friends, and relatives.

Activity. It would be useful for facilitators to begin this session with a brief overview of what oral history is and the specific relationship of women to it. You can refer to annotated oral history materials listed in the Resource section to develop this presentation.

Activity. Assign or distribute Alex Haley's "My Furthest Back Person," the exciting account of his motivation for researching Roots. This article describes the value of storytelling, its impact, and Haley's decision to share the information he gleaned from storytelling with others. It presents historical events with which millions of people can identify. This history is not an isolated incident but is part of a large-scale process. This article further defines oral history and more concretely demonstrates its importance.

Women in the community program each read a few paragraphs aloud. Their enthusiastic responses initiated a spontaneous discussion. One by one, women recalled stories told to them during their childhood. Stories that were seen as worthless or boring now took on a new light, and had a valued meaning. The high school women read the article in preparation for the class, along with the Gluck article on women's oral history. Discussion was not as spontaneous as in the community program but became enthusiastic as they, too, recalled stories told to them during childhood.

Activity. Focus discussion on women's oral history by asking participants to describe something that was told to them by a woman that should be preserved. Stories that emerged from this activity generated a great deal of identification among participants. Some women remembered stories told to them by their grandmothers, aunts, mothers, cousins, and sisters -- stories about the hard life, survival, menstrual periods, and health remedies. Other women identified with particular incidents such as secrets between girlfriends or mothers confiding in daughters.

This sharing was especially important because participants recognized common themes and issues in different experiences. Their own grandmother's or mother's story was not unusual or peculiar -- other grandmothers and mothers had similar experiences. Women's history seemed to become very real for participants. Also, the personal sharing brought home the value of oral tradition.

Activity. Asking participants to conduct tape-recorded oral interviews is an excellent way to become familiar with oral interview techniques. Assign a specific topic or event as the focus for the interview, and select reading assignments on oral interview techniques (see the Resource section). Allow two to three weeks for completion of this activity. Have participants play their tapes and discuss their experiences as interviewer or interviewee at a scheduled session.

Questions/Issues. Although oral tradition dates back to the "storytelling" of ancient times, and although come stories (Afro-American narratives) were recorded by the innovative oral interview technique early in this century, it was not until the mid-1960's that it became popularly known and used. Consequently, the field of oral history is still a young one. So much more can be discovered about how to gather oral histories, how to conduct oral interviews, with whom, and for what purpose.

There is a wide variety of approaches to gathering oral histories with lots of room for creativity. Approaches can range from formal tape-recorded interviews, to high school students conducting "note-taking" interviews with older people about their lives during a particular historical period or on a specific theme, to groups meeting to share stories about their lives, again focused on a particular topic or time period. The purpose of the group may simply be to reclaim and validate the significance of each individual's life history.

In any of these situations, concerns about the method of gathering histories or conducting interviews remain the same. While the use of a tape recorder has almost become a requisite for interviews, this tool is not necessary. Many people can't afford to purchase one. This shouldn't prevent them from gathering information. Note taking may not capture every uttered word and sound but is valuable.

Preparation is necessary for conducting an individual interview or facilitating a group meeting. You should determine the purpose, focus on a time period or theme, and develop relevant questions to spark dialogue. The questions should not be so narrow that they inhibit the interviewee's style, but specific enough so that they keep the interview focused. Sensitivity to the person(s) and situation(s) should be evident before, during, and after the interview process; establishing trust is crucial.

We strongly encourage anyone interested in undertaking such a project to read Kristine Feichtinger's "You Never Hear about Any Struggles" and the "Women's Oral History" issue of Frontiers listed in the Resource Section. Both of these works are extremely useful as guides for gathering histories through the oral interview/discussion technique. Other sources listed in the Resource section will also provide background information on oral history techniques.

The high school women completed such an assignment. They were asked to interview and be interviewed by a classmate on the three most interesting or important incidents in their life. Questions concerning technique were answered beforehand, and tape recorders were provided by the school. A detailed discussion of the outcome of this activity is included in session 5.

SESSION 3: Issues in Women's Lives: An Audiovisual Presentation
(Presented at the community program only)

Goal: To raise issues of women's economic and social survival, financial independence, alternative lifestyles for them and their children, and their work at home and in the paid labor force.

The issues raised in this session are crucial for women today just as they were for women in the past. In 1976, 38 million women were in the labor force. Of these women, 14.6 million had children under 18 years of age. U.S. Department of Labor figures show that mothers with children under age 18 and whose husbands were absent represented a greater proportion of the labor force than those whose husbands were present. Within the group whose children were under age 6, 56 percent had absent husbands while only 37 percent had husbands present. These data clearly incidate the absurdity of the belief that most women work for "pin money."

For Third World, Native American, and other races of women, racism and sexism combine to thwart their attempts to receive equitable wages with men. Working women today continue the struggle begun in the early 19th century to fight unjust working conditions, low pay, and long hours.

Activity. If possible, show The Woman's Film (the Resource section has details on how to obtain it). Made by a group of women in the San Francisco Bay area, this film is a sensitive portrayal of the lives of Black, Hispanic, and white working-class women. (If you cannot get this film try to obtain a similar one that is available locally. The film should address the following issues.)

Questions/Issues. Films are an excellent means of generating discussion. After showing the film, allow ample time for discussion. A number of questions emerge from this film. Some of these are:

- How do women portray their economic future when a man is part of their lives? When a man is not part of their lives?
- What resources and networks do women have available to them as single parents?
- What kinds of work do most women do? What ramifications does this have for parenting and working simultaneously?
- In what ways do women organize for survival for themselves and their families?

Participants identified with many of the issues that women in the film were dealing with. These included economic and social survival, work and workplace organizing, relationships with men and with children, arranging for child care and health care, single parenting, and how to organize to get what they needed.

A number of good women's films are available rent free or for a small fee through public libraries and film distribution companies. The Resource section mentions some of these. The videotape and film listed in the General Resources section in the beginning of this book are also excellent for this activity.

SESSION 4: Neglected Women
(Presented at the high school only)

Goal: To explore the life experiences and histories of those women who have traditionally been omitted from educational textbooks and neglected by society at large, such as Black, Hispanic, Native American, Asian, lesbian, poor, and working-class women.

It is imperative that as feminist historians we constantly challenge the neglect of entire groups of women. Learning the histories of these women helps us break down the barriers among us and break through our isolation.

Activity. After reading two essays from Eve Merriam's Growing Up Female: "Mountain Wolf-Woman" and "Susie King Taylor: Born a Slave," discuss the endurance and strength the two women displayed in overcoming tremendous obstacles. The stories are useful for introducing the lives of Black and Native American women and for raising issues of survival, work, and lifestyle. Participants' responses were enthusiastic; they felt the readings held their attention and explored issues that were unfamiliar to them. They were intrigued by the tremendous range of life experiences that Mountain Wolf-Woman encountered in her life -- from living in a fairly isolated, agricultural society to living in a highly technological, urbanized society. The participants were also intrigued by Mountain Wolf-Woman's independence and survival skills. In their reading of "Susie King Taylor," the participants were angered by the constant racism and oppression the author had to confront as a teacher and a domestic worker.

Activity. Ask the class to think of slang words used for ethnic, racial, and religious groups. Our motivation for this activity is to begin to talk about how such labels are used throughout U.S. history to separate people, specifically women, from one another, and to maintain racism and prejudice. Discuss what these terms mean to the participants. How do they personally feel when being called or calling someone by these slang words? Relate these responses back to the theme of how such words maintain differences among women.

An alternate activity is to ask participants to list slang words on a blackboard. Then ask them to talk about why they are or are not supposed to think about or use such terms.

We feel this activity lends itself to a discussion of the history and life experiences of women from different racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds. It also demonstrates how prejudicial and racist attitudes affect behavior.

At the conclusion of this activity, present a short overview on the diversity and complexity of different women's lives, life experiences, and history. Facilitators can consult the Resource section for suggested materials on various groups of women.

Questions/Issues. Recalling terms such as "wop," "mick," and "nigger," the participants began to make connections between how names affect them and how they affect other people. Also, they were able to relate to other racial, religious, and ethnic groups by recalling their personal experiences and the stories their parents and grandparents told them about discrimination and prejudice. We found "Susie King Taylor" particularly helpful in discussing issues of racism, sexism, and how women were affected by and dealt with these issues, both historically and currently. The following are some discussion questions.

What similarities existed between the conditions faced by Black and white women in American society during the 19th century? What similarities exist today?

Do Black, Native American, Hispanic, lesbian, poor, and working-class women today continue to face difficulties because they are both "minorities" and women?

SESSION 5: Oral History Interviews and Techniques
(Presented at the high school only)

Goal: To discuss the participants' experience with oral history interviews and techniques.

Doing oral histories is one of the best ways to learn history. It validates the family histories of the participants and gives a sense that history is made up of real people's lives. Feminist historians have begun to center on oral history as a major source of historical information on the life experiences of "ordinary" women.* Oral history places importance on the lives of all of us and uncovers a rich and exciting history. By validating our histories and experiences, oral history becomes a tool for gaining control over our lives and our self-images.

Activity. Have participants share their tapes and experiences in completing the interviews assigned at the end of session 2. After listening to the tapes, we discussed some of the difficulties of students in doing the interviews. Unfortunately, the major difficulty was the lack of working tape recorders. Other concerns involved nervousness and knowing when to intervene in the interview to limit the interviewee's discussion time.

Questions/Issues. We suggest the following points be considered when doing oral history interviews:

1. Make sure to practice with the tape recorder prior to starting the interview.

2. Before starting, prepare some specific questions and points that you wish to cover in the interview.

3. Be conscious of who is doing most of the talking -- you or the interviewee.

*For a thorough listing on oral histories of "ordinary" women, see the issue on "Women's Oral History," Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies 2 (summer 1977).

4. Be aware of how much you are interjecting your own feelings, interpretations, and arguments into the interview.

Although most participants did not complete this assignment, they were enthusiastic about doing interviews, and considered the activity both fun and a worthwhile learning experience.

Activity. An alternative activity is to have students talk to their parents and relatives about their lives growing up in the 1920's, the depression, World War II, the 1950's, and the 1960's. Focusing on the following questions could be helpful.

What kinds of work do these people do?

What kinds have they done in the past?

What was day-to-day living like?

What was high school or child rearing like?

What kinds of music did they listen to or play?

This information can be supplemented by family photographs and other items the family has handed down from generation to generation.

Activity. Another activity could be to interview older people in the participants' school or community. This can be helpful in sharing information about different people's perspectives and similar experiences across generations.

SESSION 6: Women's History and the Women's Movement
(Presented at the high school only)

Goals: To breakdown myths surrounding the contemporary women's movement.

To make connections with women activists of the past and present.

Coming into contact with the lives of different groups of women working closely with the women's movement is an important first step in breaking down some of the mystique that surrounds them. This mystique, as well as fear of the movement, is created by media stereotypes of bra burners and lesbians and perpetuated by a lack of personal contact. This personal involvement often reveals to younger women that activist women of the past were concerned with many of the same issues as are contemporary women.

Activity. Visit a local women's center or women's resource group in your area. This contact can help participants become familiar with activities and issues they might not be aware of. The women's movement will become more relevant to participants' own lives.

Questions/Issues. Feelings concerning alternative lifestyles, non-traditional work, and sexuality may surface during a visit of this kind. It is important to discuss these feelings and, if possible, to provide some historical information on the subjects participants are concerned with. For example, with regard to lesbian relationships, one can draw upon 19th century information. Women's deep friendships and lifelong bonding were not accidental; they were choices. These choices have been and are essential to women's lives. They should be explored and supported.

Women's centers, resource groups, and organizations in general are part of current women's history. They provide a space for us to connect with our history. As with oral history, women's organizations help us validate our life experiences, as they are an aspect of the contempory women's movement that is making women's history.

Activity. Have participants work on "Herstory: A Crossword Puzzle on Women" together. The puzzle offers the participants a nonthreatening way of learning factual information about women's history. It also stimulates discussion on various events related to women's history in the U.S.

The participants enjoyed doing the crossword puzzle and were both surprised and pleased that they knew a number of the answers. Crossword puzzles and games are useful for stimulating the learning process.

SESSION 7: Women's Work Is Never Done
(Presented at the community program only)

Goal: To discuss the issue of women's work in the home and in the labor force in both personal and historical terms.

Nine out of ten women in the U.S. do paid work at some point in their lives. Not only do women earn less money than men, but Third World women earn even less money than white women. This gap is widening.

Activity. Hand out copies of Women's Work Is Never Done, a play written by a group of Boston-area women. Have participants take turns reading excerpts from the play aloud.

The play is extremely informative and raises connections between historical and contemporary issues such as paid and unpaid labor, survival, and relationships. The participants enjoyed the chance to read aloud, the direct writing style, and the material itself, which stimulated lively discussions. They felt that history was coming alive and that the conditions of survival and work for women in the 19th century were very similar to the conditions participants themselves had faced or were facing. Reading the play aloud also presents an excellent opportunity for facilitators to interject additional historical information on the event or situation being described. This session was very exciting and successful.

Questions/Issues. Following are some questions useful for discussion.

- What kinds of paid work have the participants done?
- What are their feelings about the work they've done or are doing?
- Why do women say, "I'm just a housewife"?

SUMMARY

This course was not designed as an in-depth study of specific topics or periods in women's history. The limited time wouldn't do justice to that approach. The course was conceived as a consciousness-raising opportunity, and a general introduction to women's history. Broad conceptual and theoretical issues dominate this approach.

The objective is for participants to become sensitive to the topical and political concerns involved in defining and studying women's history. This particular course deals with sex, class, and race issues. The social and political awareness that emerges from exposure to these concerns will help people to further examine women's history. This approach is viewed as more valuable than simple content learning since it forms a foundation that can be taken beyond the confines of this course.

Good luck! Our culture is waiting to be uncovered, reclaimed, and shared with others.

Reading and Writing About Women's Lives

SONDRA STEIN has taught women's studies courses and women's writing workshops since 1970 in both the United States and England. Her poetry and reviews have been published in a variety of feminist publications and small magazines including River Styx, Equal Times, and Feminist Studies.

Reading and Writing About Women's Lives

Reading and Writing about Women's Lives is my version of a women and literature course. As a woman, feminist, teacher, reader, and writer, my primary assumption in designing this course was that the power of literature in our lives is proportional to its ability to articulate a vision that helps us better understand ourselves and our place in the world. In so doing, literature gives us power to change our lives. The books we read that "stay with us" are books that describe women doing things and making choices and decisions that seem true to us. Sometimes they confirm our feelings about ourselves and our lives, our experiences of relations between women -- as friends, lovers, mothers, and daughters -- and between women and men -- as friends, lovers, husbands, and fathers. Sometimes these favorite books open up new possibilities for relationships with others.

But this is usually our secret, private relationship to books. In school we are taught to dismiss this experiential response to literature. We are not supposed to identify with characters in books, or talk about our feelings about what happens to them. Instead, we are taught to approach literature as if it were some mysterious, sacred "artifact" -- what English teachers call a "classic." This traditional approach distances us from literature because very few of the books preserved as classics and taught in our schools are by women. The reason for this is not hard to find. The work of women writers has not been exempted from the general denigration and trivialization of women's experience in a patriarchal culture. According to the male literary establishment, women writers were "scribblers," not artists, and both their subject matter and point of view were considered trivial or inappropriate. As a result, we have historically been denied access to the literature that speaks most directly to our experience as women.

As the contemporary women's liberation movement began to challenge the trivialization of our experience and to validate our lives as women, the academic wing of that movement began teaching courses that sought to uncover our history. During the past ten years, women and literature courses have begun to reverse the neglect of women writers. They teach literature as a way of understanding the lives of women of other cultures and other times, of sharing experience, and of seeing new ways to understand our own lives. The emphasis of most of these courses, however, still lies on literature as artifact. As a result, we are still distant from these works and from the women who wrote them. We think of these women as great writers -- somehow different from us -- and forget that writing is a process of communication.

We all tell stories about our lives. What separates those of us who share our stories orally, face to face, in conversation with others, from those of us who write them, and therefore can share our stories with a wider audience, is not genius or innate ability. This romantic view of who can write is elitist: it masks the politics of literacy -- of who is taught to read and write, of who is given access to these tools for controlling and shaping our lives.

The reason that massive literacy campaigns are one of the first priorities of liberation movements is that in every culture, the class, the race, the people in power, have deprived those whose lives they control of these essential skills. In this country, before the Civil War, it was against the law to teach slaves to read and write. Laws against literacy are usually unnecessary, since unequal access to quality education has historically meant -- and still means today -- that nonwhites, poor, and working-class people of all races have not learned to read and write well. As a result, they have not used their own words to tell the stories of their lives.

Since the history of civilization as we know it is the history of patriarchal culture, women have a special need to breach the "conspiracy of silence" that locks us into powerlessness. Women need to write -- to break down the isolation that surrounds our lives; to understand our lives and to tell others about our lives, to give other women support and inspiration to live their lives and to write about them. We can all learn to write. For all of us, writing can be a powerful, transformational act. As Judy Grahn writes in Anathema, included in the liner notes of the record Where Would I Be Without You? The Poetry of Pat Park and Judy Grahn, Olivia Records, Los Angeles, Calif., 1976:

> ...art is not a way out, there is no way out.
> there is only what we've got and how to turn it
> around to reinforce our fighting genius; to
> clarify and point out what has been stolen
> from us and that we must take it back or con-
> tinue with nothing.
> at its best it comes from our bitterest anger,
> our most expansive love, our most courageous
> hopes, our most vital visions, our most honest
> insights, our fiercest determination.

GOALS/OBJECTIVES

Given this understanding of the ways in which reading and writing about our lives as women validates our experiences and empowers us to change our lives, the basic goals of this course are:

- To introduce women to poetry written by women about their lives.
- To encourage women to write about their lives.
- To help women improve their writing skills.

METHODOLOGY

To facilitate achieving these goals, the course was divided into two major sections: Reading about Women's Lives and Writing about Women's Lives.

Reading about Women's Lives introduces a major theme of the course: the common woman. As we read about other women's struggles to survive -- to feel good about how they look and act, to get a job, to define their sexuality, to make decisions about having or not having children, to fight for custody of their children, to deal with addiction -- we see again and again that experiences we thought were unique to our own lives are common to all women. As we understand these commonalities -- the ways in which the personal is political -- we stop blaming ourselves for our failures. And we become aware that to end the sexism, the racism, the classism we experience in our lives, we must all work together to change the world we live in.

Writing about Women's Lives builds on what we read and discuss in the first section of the course. We <u>are</u> the common women, and our experiences and feelings about our lives become the material for the class sessions as we begin to write the stories of our lives.

The success of this course depends on participants becoming involved in the process of poetry as a means of exploring and sharing our own lives. As a result, it is crucial that the facilitator choose materials that speak directly to participants' needs, experiences, and desires. If participants are not excited by the material introduced in Section I: Reading about Women's Lives, or if they find it difficult to relate it to their own lives, they will not move easily to writing their own poems. It is just as crucial that the facilitator adapt her presentation (teaching strategies) to participants' needs. Again, if the format is not comfortable, participants will not be able to talk or write.

My experience in presenting this course at a residential community program for drug- and alcohol-dependent women and at an alternative high school confirmed the necessity for this kind of adaptation. On the whole, I felt the course was more successful at the community program for adult women. This was because I was familiar with the program and the needs of the residents, because the women formed a cohesive group, and because my expectations of what the course should be like were similar to those of the residents and staff. I think the course at the high school could have been more successful had I been better prepared for that community. The comparison of the two sites that follows focuses on three important variables -- setting, materials, and strategy -- which may help another teacher/facilitator prepare for either kind of site.

<u>Setting</u>. I first presented the course at the community program for adult women. All the residents (approximately ten) participated in the course. Sessions were held for two and a half to three hours, one evening a week, for three consecutive weeks. We met in an informal living room where all group meetings take place. Expectations were that the course would be consonant with the principles of the program* and that it would encourage the kind of honest examination of personal strengths and weaknesses that the rest of the program demanded. A staff member participated in all sessions to communicate to the rest of the staff both the content and process of each meeting.

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*For a description of the community program's philosophy, refer to the site descriptions included in the User's Guide.

The second site was a four-year alternative high school. The class was composed of ten females and one male, ranging in age from 14 to 19. All were white, of poor or working-class backgrounds. Here the course was offered for four weeks, with two 50-minute sessions per week. It took place in a traditional classroom setting. Since the course was part of the regular high school program, the participants came with expectations that I would conduct myself as a traditional teacher.

The informal setting of the course at the community program was much more conducive to the aims of the course. The constraints imposed by a regular classroom setting became clear when we moved the high school class outside on fine-weather days. Students were much more relaxed, much more attentive, much more involved in the discussion in the less formal setting. For this reason I would recommend that teachers/facilitators working in school buildings try to get access to a lounge or study room for the course.

The extra time allotted for each session at the community program also helped produce the relaxed, informal workshop atmosphere most conducive to writing. At the high school, I found it necessary to expand Section I to four sessions to try to build toward an equivalent intensity achieved in the 3-hour sessions at the community program. In this way, I hoped to allow more time for us to get acquainted and feel comfortable before we embarked on writing in Section II. When we did begin writing, however, there was no way to compensate for the short class periods. Students were just getting involved in the process when the 50 minutes ended. For these reasons I would recommend a minimum of 90 minutes for each session of this course.

Materials. At the community program the participants were concerned with dealing with their strengths and weaknesses, with their fears and prejudices, with learning to survive without drugs, with their sexuality, and with being mothers. Since I was familiar with the program before I designed the course, the materials I chose, "The Common Woman" poems, worked well here. Although I was prepared with more materials if we needed to expand Section I, when we finished discussing "The Common Woman" poems all the women were ready to move on to creating their own poems.

The same materials were not appropriate at the high school, primarily because of differences in age, experience, and the presence of a male. These students could not relate to the experiences of the women in "The Common Woman" poems. They were willing to talk about abortion (poem 6) but giggled with embarrassment when we came to the poem about lesbianism. I think if the male hadn't been present in the class, I would have pursued this issue; but given the situation, I let the poem and the discussion drop. I learned in these early sessions that these students were concerned with work, future life alternatives, high school experiences, relationships between men and women, and sex discrimination (though they weren't sure it existed). For the rest of the course, I tried to choose materials that would speak directly to these concerns. The most successful materials here were the poems I used from Male and Female under Eighteen. For complete citations of these materials, refer to the Resource section of this curriculum.

Strategy. When working in a community-based program, it is important for the facilitator to establish herself as someone who can be trusted, who has something to offer, and who is interested in the women and their program which is so crucial to their lives. Since I had some history of association with the community program, I was not coming in "cold." I felt comfortable when I arrived the first night. I spent time talking with the residents and ex-residents I knew and introducing myself to the staff on duty. This is crucial. If you don't know the program in which you are going to work, spend as much time there beforehand as you can.

I spent the first 20 minutes or so of the first session introducing myself. I told them something about my own personal and political history, about the grant to develop the course (including financial data), about why I had chosen to be there, and about why I wanted to facilitate this particular course. My intent was to meet the women as equals: to introduce myself as a woman/poet who wanted to share my love of poetry with them and to encourage their own writing skills. Their primary concerns were that I be "straight" with them, and that I be a participant rather than a teacher. They wanted me to expose myself as much as I was asking them to expose themselves. While I prefer this approach to "teaching" anyway, I was pushed a lot harder by the women here than anywhere else I have worked to drop all vestiges of the "teacher" role. It was hard at times but worth it, in terms of both what I learned and the success of the course.

Since the high school students were not comfortable with the open discussion/workshop format, I had to approach the material very differently here. I rediscovered that high school students are much more responsive to more directed sessions that focus on specifics as a way of exploring general ideas. Therefore, in Section I, I developed exercises that involved more concrete activities (such as making lists, charts, and graphs collectively on the board; writing answers to prepared questions) as a way to explore a given poem or short story. For Section II, I depended more on model poems for writing exercises than at the community program. These model poems demonstrated a particular poetic technique that I wanted the students to try.* They provided both a structure for writing and material for class discussion. We needed this outside material because students of this age are generally reticent to share their writing with the rest of the class. I found that they wrote honestly only when they thought their writing was secret. To solve the feedback problem, I wrote full responses to each student poem, in addition to walking around and giving immediate feedback and suggestions while students were writing. Other teachers/facilitators might want to structure some time for individual tutorials with students to discuss their writing.

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*For examples of how to use this approach, I suggest that facilitators look at Kenneth Koch's Rose, Where Did You Get That Red?, which describes how he taught poetry to children. See the Resource section for the full citation.

RESOURCES

Given the short duration of the course and the limited time for outside reading by participants, I decided to use poetry rather than short stories or novels. I tried to choose poems that represent the breadth of women's experiences and situations: poems by Black and white women, by working-class and middle-class women, by lesbians and heterosexual women. I encourage others to be mindful of this range when they are choosing material for the particular sites where they will be using the curriculum.

Introductory Background Materials

At the beginning of each course, I talked with participants about the obstacles women have historically had to overcome in order to write -- from lack of education to lack of time owing to the many demands on our lives: working, child care, keeping house, and so on. Facilitators may want to read any of the following for their own background or present them to the participants.

Griffin, Susan. "This Is the Story of the Day in the Life of a Woman Trying" (poem). Like the Iris of an Eye. New York: Harper & Row, 1976.

Olsen, Tillie. "Silences: When Writers Don't Write" (essay). Images of Women in Fiction: Feminist Perspectives. Edited by Susan K. Cornillion. Bowling Green, Wis.: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1973.

Rich, Adrienne. "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Revision" (essay). The Poetry of Adrienne Rich. Edited by Barbara C. and Albert Gelpi. New York: W.W. Norton, 1975.

Webber, Jeannette, and Joan Grumman, eds. Woman as Writer. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1978.

Woolf, Virginia. A Room of One's Own. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1929.

Poems Used in the Course

Grahn, Judy. "The Common Woman." Rising Tides. Edited by Laura Chester and Sharon Barba. New York: Pocket Books, 1973.

Larrick, Nancy, and Eve Merriam, eds. Male and Female under Eighteen. New York: Avon, 1973.

Replansky, Naomi. "A Good Day's Work," and Marge Piercy, "To Be of Use," in Women Working: Stories and Poems. Edited by Nancy Hoffman and Florence Howe. Old Westbury, N.Y.: Feminist Press, 1977.

Shange, Ntozake. For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide... New York: Macmillan, 1975.

Walker, Margaret. "Lineage." No More Masks! Edited by Florence Howe and Ellen Bass. New York: Doubleday and Co., 1973.

Other Useful Anthologies of Women's Poetry

Bernikow, Louise, ed. The World Split Open. New York: Vintage Books, 1974.

Bulkin, Elly, and Joan Larkin, eds. Amazon Poetry. Out and Out Books, 44 Seventh Ave., Brooklyn, N.Y. 11217

Konek, Carol, and Dorothy Walters, eds. I Hear My Sisters Saying: Poems by 20th Century Women. New York: Crowell, 1976.

Lifshin, Lynn, ed. Tangled Vines: A Collection of Mother and Daughter Poems. Boston: Beacon Press, 1978.

Ordinary Women/Mujeres Communes: An Anthology of Poetry by New York City Women. Ordinary Women, P.O. Box 664, Old Chelsea Station, New York, N.Y. 10011

Segnitz, Barbara, and Carol Rainey, eds. Psyche: The Feminine Poetic Consciousness. New York: Dell, 1973.

Selected Journals

Chrysalis. The Women's Building, 1727 North Spring Street, Los Angeles, Calif. 90012

Conditions. P.O. Box 56, Van Brunt Station, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11215

Heresies. P.O. Box 766, Canal Street Station, New York, N.Y. 10013

Books on Writing Poetry

Deutsch, Babette. Poetry Handbook: A Dictionary of Terms. New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1969.

Koch, Kenneth. Rose, Where Did You Get That Red? Teaching Great Poetry to Children. New York: Vintage, 1974.

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CONTENT

The following course outline is intended to be suggestive, not prescriptive. If you have taught literature or writing courses, you know that every time you teach a poem or a story, you teach it differently. Even if your approach is consistent, how you feel that day, who your students are, and how they feel all effect what happens in class.

For this reason I haven't actually attempted to tell you how to teach this course. Instead of directions, what I have written is a first-person record of how I conducted the two versions of this course, why I chose the poems and activities I used in each session, and how I approached them. I do hope that you define yourself as a feminist and that you are committed to gifting every woman you teach with the power to write her own story.

SECTION I: READING ABOUT WOMEN'S LIVES

Goals: To introduce poetry written by women about their lives.

To break down the notion of poetry as artifact, and to encourage women to enter the poems and explore that which corresponds with their own experience.

To prepare women for Section II (their own writing) by:

creating an informal workshop atmosphere;

giving the women a chance to get to know one another and you to encourage the openness and trust necessary for collective writing and critiquing;

introducing women to the basic tools of poetry: rhythm, voice line, image, metaphor, simile, and so on.

SESSION 1: Reading and Discussing "The Common Woman" poems by Judy Grahn (Presented at both sites)

"The Common Woman" poems were chosen as a starting point for the course because of their theme, content, and technical clarity.

Theme. The poems introduce the basic theme of the course: the common woman. Each poem, in itself and as part of the whole, makes the point that though our experiences are unique, they are also common to us as women. The problem facing us is to try to understand our initial response to each woman in the poems: to decide what makes her a "common woman."

Content. The seven poems in this series are concrete, direct, honest. They all focus on questions of survival: the strengths we develop, the armor we assume for protection, the disguises we wear. They present women of all ages, races, and classes embracing a variety of lifestyles and facing a variety of life crises.

A brief description of "The Common Woman" poem follows:

I. "Helen, at 9 a.m., at noon, at 5:15"

An ambitious career woman,

trying to make it
in a male form...

II. "Ella, in a square apron, along Highway 80"

A tough and tough-minded waitress, who was jailed for shooting a lover who abused her child, who lost custody of her child while in jail, who we see dealing with sexual harrassment at work.

She keeps her mind the way men
keep a knife -- keen to strip the game
down to her size.

III. "Nadine, resting on her neighbor's stoop"

The strength of the ghetto neighborhood she lives in:

She holds things together, collects bail
makes the landlord patch the largest holes.

IV. "Carol, in the park, chewing on straws"

A lesbian, struggling with the conflicts that arise from needing to keep that secret in her public work life:

She goes as far
as women can go without protection
from men.

V. "Detroit Annie, hitchhiking"

A kind of Janice Joplin, who is self-destructive in her need to constantly prove that she is alive.

...She figured out that the only way
to keep from being frozen was to
stay in motion...

VI. "Margaret, seen through a picture window"

A married woman, fired from her job for "making strikes," we see her dealing with abortion, with her physical self-image (she hates her shape), with the boredom of her life:

Lusting for changes, she laughs through her
teeth, and wanders from room to room.

VII. "Vera, from my childhood"

The culminating poem of the series, clearly the most emotionally powerful to the poet, which traces the struggles of this woman against poverty, against alcoholism, to maintain a vision of people as "beautiful golden birds [that] must be preserved":

> the common woman is as common
> as good bread
> as common as when you couldn't go on
> but did.
> For all the world we didn't know we held in common
> all along.

Technical Clarity. "The Common Woman" poems are written in simple, conversational English. They are good to use for a beginning discussion of some of the "tools" of poetry writing. Each poem is controlled by a dominant image expressed in the simile of the last two lines:

> The common woman is as common: as the common crow
> as a rattlesnake
> as a nail
> as a thunderstorm
> as the reddest wine
>
> and so on.

The clarity of this dominant image makes it easy to explore the ways in which all the details and images within the poem help us understand and appreciate more fully the meanings of this final image.

Beginning with a group of poems by one writer also helps participants understand how these "tools" of poetry work. Participants get a chance to see how the writer adapts rhythm, line length, word choice, and image to fit her subject. They begin to get a feel for a writer's style and to understand that line length, word choice, and so on are not used arbitrarily but for a purpose.

Activity: Introductory Discussion of the Theme. Before we read the poems, I asked the women what they thought the word "common" meant. How would you use it in a sentence? Is it a positive or negative valuation? Then I explained some of the changes in the word over time (you can use the Oxford English Dictionary for etymology).

The definition of "common" changed from "shared by all/many, belonging equally to" to "ordinary, undistinguished, having no rank" (i.e., the common people) to "vulgar, low, coarse."

We discussed the social and political reasons for these changes -- how they reflect greater, more open conflict between the people in power and the rest of us.

I asked the students to consider, as we read each poem, how the word "common" was being used. What does it mean to say that each of these women is a common woman? Do we know her type? Do we see her everywhere? Are we all like her?

Activity: Reading the Poems. Each of the seven poems was approached in the same way. One person would volunteer to read the poem aloud. Sometimes another and still another person would want to try reading the poem. Since reading aloud is a good way to overcome embarrassment about poor reading skills as well as to develop confidence, I encouraged as many women as wanted to to read each poem. The initial tendency of most of the women was to read a sentence straight through without pausing at line breaks. As we discussed the technical aspects of the first poems, I talked about how important words are placed at either the beginning or end of a line, so that we pause before or after them, giving them extra emphasis. By the time we got to the third and fourth poems, I began to encourage women to stop at the end of each line whether there was punctuation or not. You may want to bring in the record Where Would I Be Without You: The Poetry of Pat Parker and Judy Grahn to let participants hear how the poet reads her poems. But don't do this right away -- let the women try first.

Questions/Issues.

1. Content.

- How do you feel about this woman? Do you like her? Why or why not?
- Do you know her? Is she familiar? Is her situation familiar?
- What makes you angriest about this poem? What do you feel best about?

I used these questions for each poem. Then we would focus on the particulars of a poem. For example, for "Helen," I asked: Have you ever worked for someone like her?

We talked about the dehumanization of work: about how we felt about our supervisors; about what happened to us when we were in positions of responsibility and control over other people. We tried to understand why work situations make people put on armour the way Helen does. What is particular to women in this situation? Do they respond to pressure differently from men? What different kinds of pressures do they face? We tried to think about alternative work structures and responses.

2. Technique. What is it about the way the poem is written that makes us feel the way we do? At the community program, this part of the discussion usually flowed right into and out of the content discussion. We would try to understand why women responded strongly to particular images -- for example, strong sight, smell, taste, and feeling images -- by trying to see what particular word evoked the feeling or by examining less successful alternatives. We would try to figure out how the meaning of repeated images changed with each use. Discussion focused on the controlling images expressed in the final similes. In "Helen," for example, why is she described as a crow? We talked about how the word "crow" is usually used with women, and whether there were differences in the way Judy Grahn used this image.

This approach can easily be adapted to each of the poems in this series. Toward the end of the session, we began to focus on images repeated throughout the series -- images of energy, metal, change, and anger. The final poem connects all the poems and focuses on the theme of what we have in common as women.

SESSION 2: Reading and Discussing "The Common Woman" Poems by Judy Grahn
(Presented at the high school only)

Goals: To explore the ways in which women are compared to animals in our society (i.e., chick, crow, fox...).

To contrast this way of using animal imagery with the way Grahn uses it to expand our understanding of the character of each of these women (i.e., Ella is like a rattlesnake because she strikes back when she is attacked).

Activity. Since several of the poems compare women to animals, we listed on the board all the animals that women are often compared to. Then we made a list of all the animals men are compared to. We discovered that most of the animal images were used to describe how women looked, while most of the images were used to describe how men behaved. This led to a discussion of how these words are used against us, about how we feel about how we look, and about how this self-image affects how we feel about ourselves as people.

SESSION 3: Reading and Discussing "The Butcher"
(Presented at the high school only)

Goals: To explore post-secondary school options for young working-class women in the society.

To explore the ways in which these options have or have not changed since "The Butcher" was written in 1940.

Activity. Read the discuss "The Butcher" by Wilma Shore, a short story in Women Working: Stories and Poems. The story begins:

> In the Bronx, where Millie Patron grew up, a girl who wanted to work knew she would be either a school teacher or a stenographer. One or the other. And long before Millie finished high school she had made up her mind. For one thing, she knew she wasn't smart enough to be a school teacher without a lot of work; and for another thing she knew it would only be a few years anyhow till she got married.

We also talked about how students felt about the division of labor at home. This led to some arguments about what it was or was not appropriate to expect a man to do -- even when both man and woman work outside the home.

We also talked about what marriage meant to these girls. How important is marriage in the life of a woman? Why is it important? Is it as important in a man's life? Why or why not? This discussion led directly to consideration of question 4. (Indeed, as the above discussion suggests, everyone was sure things would be better if Millie went back to work.)

SESSION 4: Reading and Discussing Poems about Work
(Presented at the high school only)

Goals: To further explore attitudes about work.

To explore the ways in which three different poets use language to communicate attitudes about work.

Activity. Read and discuss three poems about work: "A Good Day's Work" by Naomi Replansky, "Lineage" by Margaret Walker, and "To Be of Use" by Marge Piercy.

Questions/Issues. "A Good Day's Work" by Replansky

1. Content.

To discuss the concept of having a master -- of working not for yourself but for someone else -- explore the meanings of "Whose dog am I?" What does it mean to describe yourself as a dog? As the timeclock's dog? In what ways is the narrator like a dog? Do you ever feel this way about your work?

To discuss sexual politics and their connection to work relationships under capitalism, focus on stanza two: "Learn how to smile at foremen./A dirty joke and time for a smoke./Be slick, be quick, be human." Why is smiling at foremen important? What's the relationship between a dirty joke and time for a smoke?

To understand how work shapes our personal life, explore the meanings and contradictions of the phrase "be slick, be quick, be human." Explore the contrast between the smallness of night and the largeness of day. Why does it feel that way to the narrator? Have you ever felt this way?

2. Technique.

Focus on the use of internal rhyme and repetion, and the image of night and day. How are night and day described? What's the effect of using lines from a familiar song?

The rest of the story is about Millie's preparation for marriage, her glorious first six months of marriage, and the disillusion that set in. Before we discussed the story, I asked each high school student to write answers to the following questions on a mimeographed sheet. Then we discussed the questions, focusing on individuals' future plans.

1. Millie says that the two choices available to her after high school are to be a school teacher or a stenographer. What choices are available to you? Would you have different choices if you were male (female)?

2. Make a schedule of Millie's day before she got married. Make a schedule of her day at the end of the story. Compare them.

3. "Because even when she was still a little kid she knew that the most important thing was getting married, having her own house, and maybe a couple of kids, loving her husband, and getting to have the warmth and assurance she saw in her own mother." Explain how you feel about marriage. Is it similar to or different from the way Millie feels? In what ways?

4. By the end of the story Millie's feelings about marriage have changed, but neither she nor Lou understands why. Do you? Explain what you think has happened.

We developed a list of students' responses to the first question. Most felt that sex did not make a difference in the choices available to them. Next to the first list we developed a list of male jobs. We discovered two things: 1) that although women could hold most of the jobs men can in this society (and vice versa), there were more men holding women's jobs than women holding men's jobs; i.e., there was job discrimination against women, even if it was against the law; and 2) that as jobs required more education, more skill, and offered more status and higher monetary rewards, the proportion of men to women in these jobs increased.

These two discoveries led to a discussion of the nature of sex discrimination and the ways in which women are kept out of positions of power in this society. Since most of the women in the class did not feel directly threatened by this, we moved on to talk about attitudes toward marriage (question 3).

Most women felt that Millie's view of marriage was too romantic. They felt it is the woman's responsibility to share everything with her husband -- including work. This assumption reflects the home life of these students: both parents work in almost all the households, and they tend to hold similar jobs. I talked some about how this was a recent development, partly the result of women being drawn into the labor market during World War II, and partly the result of the economic conditions in this country.

Questions/Issues. "Lineage" by Walker

1. Content.

Focus on work: how is the poet's attitude toward work different from the previous poem? Why?

Focus on our attitudes toward our grandmothers: what do participants know about their own grandmothers and the kind of work they did? What are the differences between their lives and ours? What is Walker implying about such differences?

Focus on slavery: I didn't introduce biographical information about Margaret Walker and her grandmothers until after we discussed the issues above.* I wanted to begin by concentrating on what was universal about the poem. I thought that knowing the poem was about slavery would separate students from it (there were no Black students in this class).

Students were surprised that Walker could talk so affirmatively about slavery. We talked here about the importance of celebrating the strength of the people who had lived through slavery, of celebrating what had been achieved, rather than simply naming the cost. I wrote a favorite poem of mine on the board, Alice Walker's "Women," celebrating the strength of Black women who struggled through slavery and came through strong enough to leave a place for their children.**

2. Technique.

Focus on ways in which Walker uses strong sensory images to evoke grandmothers' strengths. Ask students to draw a picture of the poem. Most pictures were of the first stanza: we talked about how the stanza panned over the grandmothers working in the field like a motion picture.

We talked about activities and memories the images of "smelling of soap and onions and wet clay" evoked. We discussed how "clean words" works as a visual image in this context (like laundry hanging on a line). I talked here about how the power of poetry comes from its ability to use language to paint a picture so clearly that the reader can see, taste, smell, and feel the writer's images.

Questions/Issues. "To Be of Use" by Piercy

1. Content.

Compare the attitude in this poem toward work and workers with the two preceding poems. Give some biographical information about Piercy and her involvement in the antiwar and women's movements. How does this poem describe time spent working for social change?

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* For information on Margaret Walker, see Ora Williams, American Black Women in the Arts and Social Sciences: A Bibliographic Survey (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1973).

** The poem "Women" by Alice Walker appears in Revolutionary Petunias and Other Poems (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973).

2. Technique.

Focus on metaphors Piercy uses to let us know how she likes people to work: "I love people who harness themselves, an ox to a heavy cart." I asked people to try to develop their own metaphors (as silly or as serious as they wanted) about people they liked. Examples: I love people who buzz around all day, a bee gathering honey for the hive." I love people who smile a lot, sunshine on a cloudy day."

SECTION II: WRITING ABOUT WOMEN'S LIVES

Goals: To continue to explore women's issues through writing.

To provide exercises that facilitate the act of writing.

To develop writing and critiquing skills by practicing writing and by examining collectively both our own writing and that of other women.

All the following activities are designed to break down participants' resistance to writing by providing them with materials, structures, and ideas that help them create their own poems.

SESSION 1: Found Poems
(Presented at both sites)

Activity. Prepare a shoebox full of words and phrases you have clipped from newspaper headlines. Sports pages and women's or family pages are good places to look because the word arrangements are often poetic (e.g., I found a sports headline talking about the prospects for a particular team headed "Chances Are Dim, Grim, Slim"). These are lovely, but don't look for poetry as much as verbs, feeling words, and concepts we all have feelings about ("mother," "war," "violence"). Also bring lots of plain paper and scotch tape or rubber cement.

Ask each person to take three or four headline words from the box and to arrange and rearrange the words on a page to make a poem. They can add words to make the poems say what they want. Make a poem yourself to give people an idea of what they can do. Then circulate from person to person, giving help or suggestions when needed. Don't discourage people from creating collective poems. I found that at both sites participants helped one another a lot.

I discouraged participants from taking more than three or four headlines because having too many ideas makes it much harder. People discover this for themselves and tend to throw back extra words as they work. You will get every possible length of poem. One woman constructed a haiku about submerged danger (Danger/ Waiting/Watching/Under the Sea). Another added two or three words to make a poem about her problems with the courts. Another wrote a three-page poem about the devil.

After everyone has finished writing and assembling their poems, go around the room and have each person read her poem aloud. Women at both sites were excited about their ability to create poems, and other women responded appreciatively. Sometimes they asked for clarification, helping us learn when images are too private and how to construct images that can communicate our meaning. At the high school, one woman took about twenty headlines home so she could make more poems.

SESSION 2: Power Words
(Presented at both sites)

Activity. Ask everyone at the end of the first session to choose a "power word," a word that has special meaning for them in their lives. (The women at the community program came up with: unique, danger, bitter, confusion, violence, peace, stubborn, love, fantasy, prejudice, trapped, dreaming, silence, pride.) Tell them to spend the week thinking about it and to jot down anything that comes to mind about the word. Allow 20 minutes or so at the beginning of this session for people who have not done much writing about their "power word" to do so. Then have each person read what they have written. Allow for comments on the "content" of these poems and writings. Then talk about the writing itself. As each person reads her poem again, others can comment on what is most powerfully expressed, what the words make them think of, and changes that might be made. Then allow about 30 minutes for rewriting.

SESSION 3: Rhythm, Dramatic Reading
(Presented at the community program only)

Activity. Read aloud from Shange's For Colored Girls. I don't know another piece of dramatic writing at once so rhythmically strong and so powerfully expressive of the concerns of "colored" girls of all races. For Colored Girls is about race, name calling, sex, sexual politics, love, self-assertion, power, pain, strength, and life. I brought in copies of twenty pages or so, beginning with "ever since I realized there was someone called a colored girl an evil woman a bitch..."

About half the participants had seen the play and we had an animated discussion about it. Then we all stood up in a loose circle, every one chose roles, and we began to read. Women who were uncomfortable reading aloud initially chose small parts. But, as they got inside the words, everyone switched around to read parts that were most expressive of their own lives. What was most interesting was the different meaning each woman attached to the same lines as she discovered her own voice and meanings.

The value of this activity is that it enabled the women to discover for themselves the relationship between poetry and music, between inflection and meaning, between sound and sense. It taught women what poetry can communicate and gave them a chance to develop their own dramatic voice. This was the final activity at the community program; it ended with a sense of collectivity and power.

SESSION 4: Model Poem
(Presented at the high school only)

Activity. Read and discuss the controversial "City to a Young Girl" by Jody Caravaglia. In the summer of 1977, the Chelsea School Committee decided to remove Male and Female under Eighteen from the school library because they felt Jody Caravaglia's poem was obscene. I made copies of both the poem and a representative selection of articles and "letters to the editor" from the Boston Globe (July 28 to August 15, 1977). We read the poem together, discussed it, and decided why it wasn't pornographic. We talked about why people -- adults, particularly men -- might consider it pornographic. This led to a general discussion of pornography and violence against women in movies and television.

After this discussion, I asked everyone to read the articles and the letters to the editor. Then, pretending to be a student at Chelsea High School, each participant wrote a letter to either the school committee or the editor of the Boston Globe, explaining what she thought the school committee should do and why.

SESSION 5: Model Poem
(Presented at the high school only)

Using "The City to a Young Girl" as a model, I asked everyone to write a poem that established a basic analogy for an experience; i.e., being in school is like being in jail, the world is a zoo, and so on. The object of this activity was to get each student to appreciate the richness of analogy. I asked, what do you mean that a school is like a jail? What are the cells? Who is the warden? Who are the guards? What's the punishment? Before writing, we worked out this analogy together so everyone could see the correspondence between analogous parts.

SESSION 6: Model Poems
(Presented at the high school only)

The poems I selected from "Male and Female under Eighteen" (about nine) all made use of some sort of repetition. Some used a repeating structure (a series of questions, an alternating "If.../But..." construction). Others had a single line repeated like a refrain: "I'm the silent one," "I wish I knew where I stood," "people stare," "I can break rules now." As we read the poems aloud, we discussed how meanings of these repetitions changed and their effect on rhythmic pattern. Then I asked each student to write a poem that was modeled after the one they liked best.

SUMMARY

I imagine this course being taught one night a week for a year. I wish the women had more time to develop their writing confidence and skills. I hope that you have more time to teach the course than I did. I think you will find that the longer a group of women meets to read and write, the easier it becomes: the group develops its own momentum out of each woman's commitment to improving her own skills.

I would love to hear from anyone who models a course on this one. Tell me what you did: what worked, and what didn't work. Send me poems and stories. I'll send you some too.

Sex Roles and Socialization

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Sex Roles and Socialization

Women, as members of the subordinate culture, have often taken on their self-images from the sex-role stereotypes determined for them by the dominant culture. This culture not only stereotypes women but devalues them, and in the process inhibits women from developing their full potential. Young women begin very early to eliminate male-identified behavior; i.e., aggression and independence. Therefore, choices for their lives are limited. They often begin thinking of themselves as less valuable and capable than the young men in their lives. Often women do not develop their own identities and life-styles, but put off these decisions until they find out who they will marry.

Women have traditionally been the caretakers in our culture -- mothers, teachers, nurses, and helpers of all varieties. If they work outside the home, they usually hold low-paying, deadend jobs. These jobs, in the home and outside the home, have not been rewarded with money, status, decision-making power, respect, or active appreciation by the culture at large.

Few role models have been allowed to emerge in the culture to guide women in the process of growing up from girls to adult women, role models that can expand women's view of themselves and therefore their choices. Women often assume that their primary identities will be as wives and mothers, and that their autonomous careers and commitment to serve their self-interests will be secondary.

Women tend not to make career commitments. If they do, they tend not to make them until their thirties. When women enter the job market, out of choice or necessity, they tend not to see their life experiences as valuable. Many women who have been home managers view themselves as having no marketable skills, even though they have been administrators, caretakers, nutritionists, chefs, teachers, nurses, chauffeurs, and laundresses.

GOALS/OBJECTIVES

The explanation for women's second-class citizenship can be found in economics, religion, philosophy, and psychology. It is assumed in the Sex Roles and Socialization curriculum that the roots of second-class citizenship lie in the culture, not the individual. Rather than focusing its primary attention on the basis of women's status in the culture, this curriculum provides an experience in which the participants will gain a personal understanding of women's status in the culture and integrate these insights into their own lives.

The two major goals of this course are:

1. To support women in developing and broadening their self-images.

2. To provide participants with practical tools for continued development of their positive self-images.

Throughout the curriculum the following themes are addressed which reflect our understanding of women's personal and social development:

- At present society stereotypes women in specific roles and devalues feminine identity.
- Those traits that are identified as feminine are valuable.
- Women have within themselves the capacity to be complete and capable human beings.
- A fully developed woman is one who has the capacity to engage in, and the flexibility to use, both masculine- and feminine-identified behavior and roles.
- Collective action, including support networks for women, is a valuable strategy for personal and social change.

METHODOLOGY

The Sex Roles and Socialization curriculum is divided into three sections, each of which has two sessions. The first section focuses on how women develop in our culture: session 1 examines the participants' images of women, and session 2 examines the life stages of women in the present and future. The second section focuses on role models and new images for women: session 3 examines the family, placing particular attention on mother-daughter relationships, and session 4 examines the concept of mentors as a relationship for women. The third section focuses on life goals: session 5 examines the process of life planning, and session 6 examines power and the process of effecting changes in one's life.

The course was designed to include six one-hour sessions, although each session is a self-contained unit. While someone who participates in all six sessions will engage in a building process, it is not necessary to attend previous sessions to gain value from any one session. The course is designed to be used with groups of women. However, it is easily adaptable to groups consisting of both women and men.

The description of each session includes the goals, one or more suggested activities, discussion issues, and related topics for further exploration. The learning is experiential in nature. The full value in the activities comes when the participants discover and articulate what they have learned and connect their personal experience with woman's universal experience. In addition, the facilitator should encourage each participant to examine how she is similar and how she is different from other women.

Leave plenty of time to discuss the activities. It is most effective to do this immediately rather than waiting until the next session. Sometimes women are reluctant to discuss their feelings, so it is important for the facilitator to encourage participants to be proud of who they are and what they produce. Also, many of the activities described in these sessions are fantasy oriented and require individual space and silence for clarity and focus. Facilitators should assist participants by helping them relax. This can be accomplished by pausing at appropriate places, doing breathing exercises, and so on.

Exploring self-identity brings up many feelings, and participants need to feel free to choose how much they want to share with others. Some individuals may prefer to write their responses in journals or to share them in small groups. Some participants feel safer in small groups, others in large groups.

There may be times when the participants' values, lifestyles, culture, and class are different from those of the facilitator. It is important to respect these differences. For example, when teaching in high schools, young women often show a greater appreciation of their boyfriends than of themselves. It is important not to make them feel that this is wrong or inappropriate. The purpose of the course is not to insist that the participants adopt any specific values and choices, but to present alternative ideas for developing self-identities.

RESOURCES

The full richness of this course will be realized when a facilitator combines her own life experiences, her feminist perspective, and her background in the psychology of women literature. The annotated resources listed below are generally applicable to all six sessions.

Bolles, Richard Nelson. What Color Is Your Parachute? Berkeley, Calif: Ten Speed Press, 1972. Offers an approach to job seeking that focuses on individuals' rather than employers' needs. It might be useful in conjunction with planning for session 5, Life Planning.

Casteneda, Carlos. The Second Ring of Power. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1977. This is a fourth book in a series describing Carlos Casteneda's journey into the religion and mythology of the Yaqui Indians. In this book, he explores the nature of woman power.

Cooper, David. The Death of the Family. New York: Vintage Books, 1971. This book offers an analysis of the demise of the nuclear family.

Freeman, Jo. A Feminist Perspective. Palo Alto, Calif.: Mayfield Publications, 1975.

Gornick, Vivian, and Barbara K. Moran, eds. Women in a Sexist Society. New York and London: Basic Books, 1971. This book is an anthology of work by women about women. Articles are written by anthropologists, sociologists, educators, and psychologists. The articles are about sex-role stereotypes, depression, women and work, and power and powerlessness. A good resource for any part of the curriculum.

Hennig, Margaret, and Anne Jardim. The Managerial Woman. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Anchor Press, 1977. Offers good insight into skills that women are not socialized to develop, which makes it difficult for them to function well as managers in the public sphere. As members of the Harvard Business School community, the authors discuss their findings in the context of the corporate world. While we question their predisposition to accept the values inherent in that system and to focus on women's weaknesses rather than the strengths they might use to change that system, we feel their basic data are worth considering as part of a larger perspective on women's development.

Kahn, Kathy. Hillbilly Women. New York: Doubleday, 1973.

Kaplan, Alexandra G., and Joan P. Bean. Beyond Sex-Role Stereotypes: Readings Toward a Psychology of Androgyny. Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown, 1976. This is a series of articles on the effects of sex-role stereotyping; the articles by Sandra Bem and Mae Kemp are particularly good.

May, Rollo. Power and Innocence. New York: W.W. Norton, 1972. This book is an analysis of the effects of power and powerlessness on people's lives. It is written from a humanistic psychology point of view. While not from a feminist perspective, it contains some useful insights.

Miller, Jean Baker. Toward a New Psychology of Women. Boston: Beacon Press, 1976. This book is particularly effective in pointing out strengths inherent in the female role, such as the ability to express feelings, vulnerability, creativity, and commitment to affiliation. It also discusses the reasons why women have difficulty identifying and using their own power.

Oakley, Ann. Sex, Gender, and Society. New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1972. Summarizes studies conducted on sex-role differences. It covers personality traits, intellectual development, sexuality, social roles, and learning of gender roles, among other topics. Some cross-cultural material is also provided to help the reader understand the cultural, rather than biological, basis for gender roles.

Rich, Adrienne. Of Woman Born. New York: Bantam Books, 1977. A superb source of information and insight into the institutional devaluation of motherhood, past and present. Chapter 9, "Motherhood and Daughterhood," is particularly helpful for facilitators wishing to undertake the mother and daughter activity in session 3.

Rosaldo and Lamphere, eds. Women, Culture, and Society. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1974. See the article "Family Structure and Feminine Personality" by Nancy Chodorow. It focuses on the importance of the mother-daughter relationship in female development and the problem of ego boundaries between mothers and daughters in a society that devalues female roles.

Sheehy, Gail. Passages. New York: Bantam Books, E. P. Dutton, 1977. Discusses general development stages in the lives of women. Although it is written largely from a middle-class perspective, it offers insight into the problems most women face in their twenties and thirties in charting a course for their lives, particularly in finding mentors who can help them.

Singer, June. Androgyny: Toward a New Theory of Sexuality. Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1977. This book presents the concepts of androgyny from a psychological perspective. The author views androgyny as the "guiding principle of the new age."

Stevens, John D. Awareness: Exploring, Experimenting, Experiencing. Utah: Real People Press, 1971.

Zaretsky, Eli. Capitalism: The Family and Personal Life. New York: Harper & Row, 1976. This book offers an explanation of women's development within the family from a radical economic point of view. Zaretsky's analysis of the dichotomy between the public and private spheres as it relates to women is very helpful.

Autobiography/Biography/Fiction

An excellent resource for selecting readings in these categories is:

Women and Literature: An Annotated Bibliography of Women Writers. 3rd ed., 1976. Available from the Women and Literature Collective, Box 441, Cambridge, Mass. 02138. $3.50.

Angelou, Maya. I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings. New York: Bantam Books, 1971.
Anrow, Henriette. The Dollmaker. New York: Avon, 1972.
Bambara, Toni Cade. Gorilla, My Love. New York: Pocket Books, 1973.
Brooks, Gwendolyn. Maud Martha. New York: AMS Press, 1953.
Brown, Rita Mae. Rubyfruit Jungle. Vermont: Daughters' Press, 1973.
Kahn, Kathy. Hillbilly Women. New York: Avon, 1974.
Moody, Annie. Coming of Age in Mississippi. New York: Dell, 1977.
Paley, Grace. Enormous Changes at the Last Minute. New York: Dell, 1975.
Petry, Ann. The Street. New York: Pyramid, 1975.
Walker, Margaret. Jubilee. New York: Bantam Books, 1966.

CONTENT

SESSION 1: Images of Women

Goals: To develop a picture of a whole woman.

To examine the culture's traditional images of women.

To articulate those characteristics that are traditionally identified as male and female.

To evaluate which qualities each participant wants and does not want to incorporate into a self-image.

Activity: Storytelling. Brainstorm a list of characteristics that make up a whole woman. (An alternative would be to make a list for both men and women.) Write these on a blackboard, if available. Then, on a table or floor, spread out a variety of pictures of unknown men and women. Our pictures were cut out of newspapers and magazines and included pictures of people that were representative of the participants. Ask the participants to select one man and one woman from the pictures and to write an imaginary story about his and her life. The participants may choose to work individually or in small groups. When they are finished, ask participants to read the stories. While they do so, keep notes on recurring themes; i.e., traits that are ascribed to men and women. Finally, compare the personality traits ascribed to men and women with the lists of traits on the board.

Some of the traits that the participants recognized intellectually as important for whole women did not appear in their stories. Self-expression, job satisfaction, and independence were not viewed as important for women. The abilities to express feelings and establish long-term relationships were not viewed as important in the stories written by men about men, even though male participants initially described these as important. This activity helped participants become aware of the inconsistencies between their intellectual acceptance of the concept of androgyny and the influence of gender learning in their own lives.

Activity: Making a Collage. Explain to participants that the activity will involve making a collage of their image of a whole woman, whatever that image may be. Distribute magazines that are familiar to participants and that reflect a variety of class, racial, and ethnic backgrounds. Pass out scissors, paste, crayons, and large sheets of paper. Ask participants to flip through the magazines and pick out pictures of women to which they are attracted. (This should take about 20 minutes.)

The informal conversation between participants during this activity is as much a part of the learning experience as the collage. Note comments participants make about the pictures and use them in the discussion that follows. For example, in one session a group of young women giggled nervously at pictures of women in bathing suits, frilly clothes, and intimate contact with men. These pictures, however, did not show up in their collages. In fact, in that particular group, most of the pictures were of faces and few were of bodies. This led

to a discussion later on their discomfort with their bodies and the fact that it is "uncool" to wear frilly, feminine clothes -- a new version of stereotyping.

After the participants have chosen the pictures, ask them to make a collage. They are not restricted to the pictures to create their collage. Encourage them to draw their own images and to write whatever expresses their image of a whole woman, including poems. Finally, have participants share their collages with others in pairs, small groups, or the whole group.

Questions/Issues. Usually, just sharing the collages or stories with others is enough to begin discussion. If this does not happen, the facilitator can describe what she sees in the pictures or stories. In one group of adolescent women, I shared my observation that most of the pictures included only heads, not women's whole bodies. In another group composed of adult women, I observed that pictures of women outside the home were separate from pictures of women in family life. Both these observations were the beginning of rich discussions.

While each discussion will have its unique qualities depending on the age and life experience of the group members, the discussion should touch upon sex-role stereotyping reflected in the omissions and inclusions in the collages and stories. It will probably include conflicts between what women want and what seems possible, and how women learn about "being women." The following questions are useful to facilitate participants' understanding of their own experience and to connect it with other women's experiences.

- How do you feel when you look at the collage or compare your story with the list on the board?
- What qualities are identified as male and female?
- What qualities do you want to develop in yourself? Why?
- What qualities do you have now that you want to change? Why?
- How did you learn what is considered male and female?
- How are these sex-role stereotypes beneficial or inhibiting?
- What events in your life most affected the way in which you see yourself as a person?

Activity: Show "Being a Woman and Everything..." as an example of a woman's perception of herself from childhood to her early 30's. Compare the photographic and verbal images which Patty uses to describe herself as a woman with those which emerge from the storytelling and/or collage activity.

SESSION 2: Life Stages of Women

Goals: To examine the universal life stages of women in childhood, adolescence, young adulthood, middle age, and old age in Western culture.

To examine the tasks at each life stage.

To explore the myth that women's lives must center around motherhood; i.e., that women are always engaged in preparing for motherhood, being mothers, or saying goodbye to motherhood.

To explore how the culture supports and inhibits a woman's psychological and social development.

The following activities are three ways of helping participants become aware of the universal life stages of childhood, adolescence, young adulthood, middle age, and old age. Each participant associates feelings, thoughts, and roles with each life stage. Choose whichever activity interests you and your group to experience and discuss each stage.

Activity: Storytelling. Show the participants pictures of women at different life stages and ask them to develop a story for each.

Activity: Sharing Experiences. Ask participants to share experiences they or family members have had at different life stages. For example, most participants will remember divisions of chores in their households, childhood games, school experiences, and reaching adolescence. Married women may remember their original expectations and role concepts. Young women may have observed older sisters marrying or not marrying. We suggest the facilitator be sure she feels comfortable with this activity before undertaking it. Trying it with a group of friends might be a good way to see how it works in a given situation. (See John D. Stevens' Awareness: Exploring, Experimenting, Experiencing listed in the Resource section.)

Activity: Pass out five pieces of unlined paper and a crayon to each participant. Ask each participant to sit in a chair or a comfortable position. After a few moments of relaxation ask participants, "What image comes to your mind when you think of a six-year-old girl?" It can be a realistic picture of a girl, a series of words, or an image associated with a six-year-old girl. Help the participants by suggesting that they pay attention to details, color, and the environment of the image. If the image is of a person, what is she doing? Is she alone or with others? What is she wearing? What is she feeling? After a few moments of silence, ask participants to draw their image. If a participant cannot form an image, suggest that she begin drawing. The relaxation and drawing should take five to seven minutes.

When participants have finished drawing, ask them to close their eyes again. Repeat the process, this time asking participants to develop an image of a 16-year-old girl. Then develop images of a 30-year-old woman, a 45-year-old woman, and a 65-year-old woman. When all the drawings are complete, ask the

participants to share their drawings in pairs, small groups, or the whole group. Ask them to be aware of how they feel when they look at each picture, and what the similarities and differences are between pictures drawn for the same stage.

In one group, going through all the life stages was too overwhelming. Participants were anxious to discuss their experiences after drawing each image. Be flexible.

Questions/Issues. As with the stories and collages in session 1, sharing the pictures usually generates rich discussion. Encourage participants to comment on the patterns they see. No picture is right or wrong; it is someone's experience. In one group, images of young girls were optimistic. By age 30, the pictures reflected "broken dreams." One woman drew a picture of a broken window. This led to a discussion of what happens to women in their early adult years that leads to depression. In another group, women after 30 were always pictured with men or children until they were old, and then they were shown alone and inactive. In a group comprised of high school students, the pictures showed no differences between ages 30 and 45. This led to an awareness that these students assumed that women didn't change much after they had children.

These activities are related to those in session 1. Many of the same questions and issues are appropriate, but this time they look at women's lives over time rather than at one image. Some additional questions are as follows:

- What are the major tasks of each stage of development? Does this reflect a well-rounded experience?
- How are these tasks different for men? Is this necessary? Why? Why not?
- How do participants feel when they examine the life stages of women? How does this affect each participant's view of herself?
- Does each person want to be the same or different from the images drawn?

SESSION 3: Women in the Family

Goals: To explore the function of a traditional family and women's roles within that family.

To explore the socialization process within the family, focusing on ways in which the family reinforces sex-role stereotypes.

To explore the mother-daughter relationship.

To explore alternative roles for women in the family.

The family is the social institution where most people first experience the socialization process. The family reflects and teaches society's roles and values. Women's roles within the family reflect their second-class position in the public sphere.

Activity. Women's Roles within the Family. The first part of this activity is to explore what a family is and how it functions. Have each participant list words on a sheet of paper that define the family, using either her own or an imagined family. Suggest that each participant consider these questions: Who are included as members of the family? What are their roles? What is the function of a family? (This activity can also be done verbally with a large group.) After these lists are gathered, write a group definition of a family. Then, either as a group or individually, list all the jobs/roles that mothers, fathers, and other adults such as grandparents perform within the family. Consider the experiences of people who grew up in one-parent families or in no family. If participants are parents themselves, they might want to use the families they created as reference points.

Also, look at the functions male and female children perform within the families. Prepare a list on the board. An alternate way to gather data about families is to have each participant tell an anecdote about an experience in her own family. In one group a young woman told us an anecdote about how things changed in the family when her mother went to work. This led to an exploration not only of her appreciation of her mother's role, but her feelings that accompanied the changes.

It is important to examine not only the differences between the roles of males and females in the family, but what roles are most and least valued and rewarded. Consider what jobs are essential and require most and least skill within the family. In one class, males and females shared how they felt about assuming roles traditionally ascribed to the other sex. Only the males felt humiliated or ridiculed by the thought of such role transference. Why? What happens economically and emotionally when men and women take on roles that are rigidly sex-role stereotyped? In one group, a woman expressed ambivalence about the fact that she was recently told that her daughter was exceptionally bright. She was happy and proud, but expressed concern that her daughter would be different from other children. How would she get along later in life? She also said she would not be concerned if the child was a boy because boys are supposed to be smart.

Another area to explore is the different relationships of young men and women with both parents. Many young women have said that both their parents were uncomfortable with their emerging sexuality. Stories of teenage girls being called "cheap" or "whores" by their parents are common. Young men don't have the same experience in adolescence. What are the effects on women's development?

Explore how families could be different in the future. What would a family be like if everybody were encouraged to develop both feminine- and masculine-identified behaviors? What would be the consequences on personal and social levels? Point out that changes and the unknown are often uncomfortable, and that families resist change.

Activity: Mother-Daughter Relationships. As Adrienne Rich suggests in Of Woman Born, in this culture mothers and daughters often experience conflict with each other, and their relationship has been devalued. Strong mothers and mother-daughter relationships result in strong, well-developed women. A primary goal of this activity is to allow women to discover the importance and uniqueness of this relationship, and what may have been missing from this relationship and why. Since this is a sensitive area, try to create an atmosphere of safety in the group.

The activity involves an imaginary conversation between mother and daughter. Have each participant go to a quiet spot in the room and relax. Then ask each person to have an imaginary conversation with her mother, telling her all the ways they are different. Or, ask each participant to list on paper all the ways that she is similar to or different from her mother. When the participants are finished, have them reflect upon this experience to be aware of any feelings or thoughts that may have come up. Ask participants to share their thoughts, feelings, and what they have learned in pairs, small groups, or the whole group. Try to end up sharing with the large group.

This activity should explore the multifaceted nature of the mother-daughter relationship. Examine how the realtionship is both productive and destructive for the development of each individual. After puberty, close relationships between two women are discouraged by the culture (see Adrienne Rich). This phenomenon takes its toll on the mother-daughter relationship. It is important to examine what in the family as well as the culture-at-large inhibits or encourages positive relationships between mothers and daughters. This activity usually produces a wide variety of feelings in the participants. Some women experience anger toward their mothers and disappointment that the relationships aren't more meaningful. Others gain a feeling of appreciation of their mothers. One young woman discovered she was more similar to her mother than she imagined in ways that she both liked and disliked. Another adult woman expressed empathy and forgiveness towards her mother.

Women often observe their mothers as martyrs and victims, powerless in the world and the family. This image is not a useful role model for a young female emerging into womanhood. In addition, in this culture a woman's primary recognition and status has come from the man she marries and the sons she raises. As a result, a mother's energies must go to her husband and sons; thus, a daughter has her first experience as a second-class citizen within the family. Understanding the roots and consequences of this phenomenon is a first step in building stronger mother-daughter bonds.

SESSION 4: Role Models and Mentors.

Goals: To introduce the concept of mentors and their value.

To examine what role models and mentors exist in the culture for women and how to make them more useful in women's lives.

To explore the reciprocal relationship between student and teacher.

It is natural to be guided from one stage in life to another by role models and mentors. A role model is a person whom an individual admires, often from afar, and wants to emulate. People often envy qualities in others that they want to work toward making their own. For example, when we want to learn to be assertive we may admire an assertive person. Few female role models have emerged at a popular cultural level. Those that have are usually too special, e.g., Eleanor Roosevelt, to be useful to most women. In addition, women have not been encouraged to choose a mentor as their personal guide. A mentor is a person who inspires and guides an individual in a close relationship. In examining the lives of men and women who have had successful work lives, such a resource person is usually present to help them "learn the ropes." It is important that women see the value of mentors and that female mentors be more visible.

Activity: Mentors and Role Models. The purpose of this activity is to introduce the concepts of role models and mentors. A short lecture/discussion by the facilitator is appropriate. Then ask participants to name people or celebrities they see as role models and to list specific qualities that they admire in these people. Note the patterns that emerge. Whom do the women choose as models? If there are males in the class, how are the choices of males and females different?

Activity: Who Is My Mentor? A Journey toward Discovery. After looking at cultural role models, it is appropriate to explore who in women's personal lives are potential mentors. Often people discover that this type of relationship is already in their lives. Once participants understand its importance, they can utilize this relationship.

Ask each participant to close her eyes and relax. Explain that this exercise is a journey to discover who our mentors are. Then have each participant think of one person who has strongly influenced her in her life. This can be someone with whom she already has a personal relationship, such as a teacher, friend, or grandmother, or someone imaginary or real with whom she would like to develop a personal relationship. It is important for each participant to visualize this person in detail: what the person looks like, how old this person is, what the person is wearing, where the person is, and what she admires about this person. Then instruct participants to "pretend this person is far away and you are taking a journey to be with this person. After this long journey you finally arrive and talk with this person. Imagine the conversation. What will you say to each other? This person gives you a message that will guide you in the near future. You return home and think about the visit, and perhaps write down a description of the experience.

An alternative method is to cut out a wide variety of pictures of women from a book such as The Family of Man or magazines. Ask each participant to choose a picture she likes. After participants examine their pictures, ask them to visualize the person in the picture. Continue the activity in the same manner as above.

Questions/Issues. This activity seems to be particularly difficult for young women. Young people tend to make the mentor and the message too powerful and too important, as though it were the only message in their lives. They often fail to see the reciprocal nature of relationships: that mentors also learn. It also is important to recognize ways in which each person wants to be different from their role models and mentors.

A group of working-class high school women found this activity difficult and frustrating. They needed a lot of help to complete the experience. I assumed that either the concept or the process had little meaning. I considered the activity a failure, but the next week several students approached me privately to say how meaningful the experience had been. One student said that she finally figured out that she was smart enough to go to college and she didn't need her boyfriend and teachers to tell her anymore.

Discuss what kinds of men and women tend to be admired in this culture. How do these models affect sex-role stereotypes? Are there more male or female models? Is individualist or cooperative behavior most admired in these people? Compare these people with people in our everyday lives such as mothers.

SESSION 5: Life Planning

Goals: To increase awareness of the importance of developing long- and short-range plans.

To examine life planning as a vehicle for personal and political power for women.

To examine how women are discouraged from developing long-range plans, and the effects of school, career, personal life, and family life on long-range plans.

To examine the differences between jobs and careers.

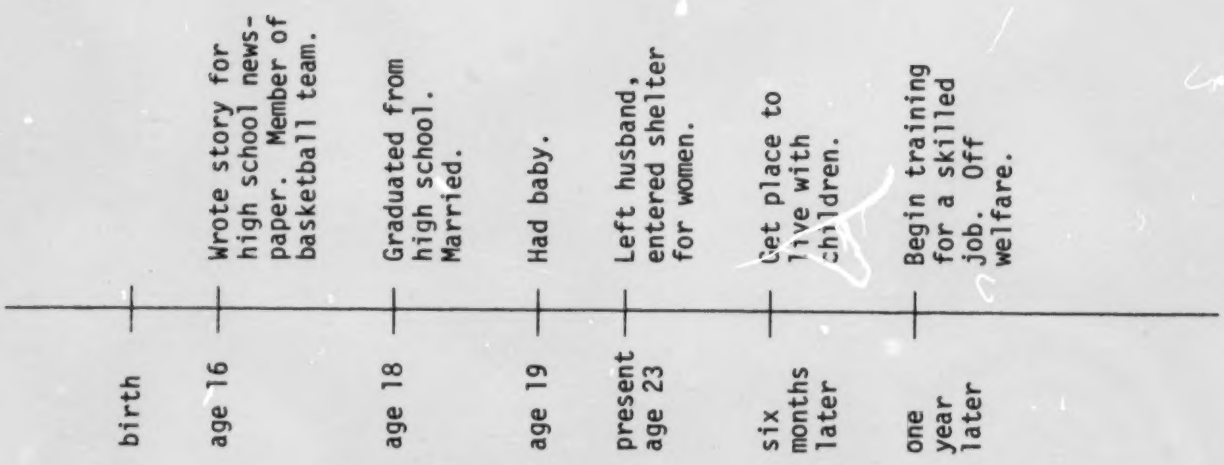
To develop practical skills for developing and implementing life plans.

Everyone dreams and makes plans. Some people plan more consciously than others. Power comes in making choices and developing strategies to make plans come true. While equal opportunities do not exist for all people, more plans could be realized if they were concrete. Also, some people believe that their aspirations aren't important. For example, a woman wanting to be a mother can surely make that choice more fulfilling if she is clear about the choice and plans for it. A woman who wants to be a car mechanic must plan a way to learn certain skills.

Activity: Life Goals. The purpose of this activity is to make clear that every woman has life goals. To clarify them and make priorities is the first step toward making the plans realities. Ask each participant to write down everything she would like to accomplish by the end of her life. Allow five minutes. Then ask each participant to write down everything she would like to accomplish in five years. Finally, ask each participant to write down everything she wants to accomplish in one year. Now have each participant examine her lists and notice the similarities and differences between them. What seem to be the most important goals? Ask participants to share their discoveries with the group. Discuss patterns that emerge in women's life choices. Does a balance exist between commitment to others and commitment to self, and between work and play? In reviewing their life plans, women should recall their conceptions of life stages from session 2.

Activity: Lifeline. Ask each participant to draw a line across a piece of paper and mark the points of birth, present age, one year into the future, five years into the future, ten years into the future, and so on. How far participants project into the future depends on the situation. For a group of women in severe crisis, stopping one year into the future is suggested. For adolescents, five years might be appropriate. Then ask participants to place major accomplishments, changes, and goals for the future on the lifeline. See the examples in the diagram. Sometimes participants feel they have done nothing worth mentioning or find it difficult to envision the future. If so, the facilitator can suggest small but important events and aspirations they might have forgotten. You might discuss why individuals, and women in particular, have so much difficulty planning. Encourage participants to see this as a common problem rather than a personal shortcoming.

Lifeline


birth
age 16
Wrote story for high school newspaper. Member of basketball team.
age 18
Graduated from high school. Married.
age 19
Had baby.
present age 23
Left husband, entered shelter for women.
six months later
Get place to live with children.
one year later
Begin training for a skilled job. Off welfare.

Activity: Videotape or Guest Speaker. The videotape on Saundra Graham is useful for this activity. (See the General Resource section.) Saundra Graham is a Black woman who became a local politician after being on welfare. In the tape she talks about her development as a politician, her development as a woman, her struggles, and the support that she needed to "make it." An alternative would be to invite someone in your community with a personal history similar to that of the participants, and who has been successful in meeting life goals, to share her experiences with the group.

Questions/Issues. All three of the activities in session 5 generated excitement and hope. In a working-class high school one young woman wanted to go to college but did not seem to have the support or money -- it seemed like an impossible dream. By making the goal a priority and looking for practical ways to get support and money, going to college seemed more of a possibility. In drawing a lifeline, many women saw that they had accomplished many important things. The videotape was perhaps most inspirational. At the community program, the women were able to see that the future could hold productive possibilities. By identifying with this woman from a similar background, they could envison more than a deadend job as well as identify support networks in their lives. For many women, active planning is a new concept. They begin to realize it is not a magical process only other people can do. Allow plenty of time to discuss the feelings of power planning generates and the frustrations that emerge as a result of cultural obstacles.

Discuss why certain people in our culture are trained to develop strategies and others are not. Some points to be made are: males learn to develop strategies early by playing team sports (see Henning and Jardim); middle-class people are encouraged to develop career plans that bring personal satisfaction, not just survival; women are encouraged to make family the primary focus rather than to include public life in their fantasies.

By examining the difference between a job and a career, it is obvious that most women and working-class individuals are not encouraged to envision careers, and most don't have the opportunity to develop them. A job is an activity a person engages in on a day-to-day basis to earn a living. A career implies long-range plans and continuity between jobs. Recognizing this difference is a good time for relating life planning to resource networks as a strategy for implementing plans.

SESSION 6: Power

Goals: To define power in a way that is useful to women.

To examine different kinds of power.

To increase participants' awareness of their feelings about power in personal relationships and the public world.

"Power" is a loaded word. In this culture power is often associated with men, money, status, muscle, and control over others. Power does not often include women or women's power. A definition of power that perhaps is more useful is the ability of an individual to cause or prevent change in his or her life (see Rollo May, Power and Innocence).

Activity: What Is Power? The purpose of this activity is for each participant to see how she experiences power and to examine the different kinds of power. Ask each participant to close her eyes and relax. Then ask each to think of a person whom she sees as powerful, and to think of that person in a specific situation. Each should think about what the person is doing, how she feels about the person in that situation, and as many details of the situation as possible. When the images are clear, ask the participants to open their eyes and share their fantasies. Look for patterns and kinds of power experienced: power used to control others, power used to compete, power used to nurture or support oneself or others, and power used for social and individual change.

Activity: Being Powerful. This activity uses the participants' personal experiences in being powerless to examine the nature of power. Ask each participant to think or write about a time in her recent past when she felt powerful and a time when she felt powerless. Allow time to write or think about as many details of the situation as possible. Ask participants to share their experiences. The facilitator should help participants identify elements that enable a person to feel powerful, such as skill, knowledge, wisdom, resources, ability to assess a situation, ability to take risks, flexibility to change strategy, collective versus individual action, and willingness to take responsibility for a specific task, activity, or environment.

Questions/Issues. Women often experience themselves as powerless because the traditional definitions of power do not include qualities that are identified as feminine. Many of us have accepted these definitions and therefore eliminate woman as potentially powerful. Issues that emerge from these activities include how women feel about being powerful or powerless, and what the positive and negative consequences are for a woman acting in a powerful or powerless manner.

Many women do not feel comfortable seeing themselves as powerful. They often feel as bad when they win as when they lose. This attitude comes from the dominant culture, which says that being powerful is a man's business and that women are destructive if they initiate action. Explore the idea that women are powerful: they possess qualities such as cooperation, nurturance, and affiliation that contribute to their ability to be effective. Some people suggest that these qualities -- collective versus hierarchical decision making, and commitment to personal and social change rather than competition and individual action -- are necessary to guarantee a future for the world (see Jean Maker Miller, Toward a New Psychology of Women).

As we have discussed elsewhere in this course description, a fully developed woman has the capacity to behave in ways that are both male and female identified. Women must see that it is useful to be assertive and "stand one's ground" when appropriate. The discussion could also include an examination of different kinds of power (see previous activity). Each person has to determine what kinds of power are useful to her.

SUMMARY

We believe that women are devalued in this culture for social and economic reasons. As a result, women are inhibited from developing their full potential as human beings. In our commitment to support women in developing their fullest potential, we assume that women are valuable and capable human beings. They have the capacity and flexibility to use both feminine- and masculine-identified behaviors and roles. This course is designed to provide an experience in which participants can gain an understanding of women's development in the culture, expand their images of women as total beings, and create strategies for achieving their goals.

Women in Cross-Cultural Perspective

KAY WARREN, feminist, teacher, and coauthor of Campesinas and Cummuneras: Subordination of the Peruvian Andes, is currently teaching anthropology at Mount Holyoke College in Massachusetts.

LISA LEGHORN is a feminist who lived in West Africa for two years. She has taught courses in women's studies and cross-cultural studies in secondary schools and community settings. She is coauthor of Who Really Starves? Women and World Hunger, and the Houseworkers' Handbook. Lisa has been very active in the battered women's movement and has worked with Transition House, a shelter for battered women in Cambridge, Massachusetts, since 1976.

Women in Cross-Cultural Perspective

Women in Cross-Cultural Perspective aims to expose women to the different value systems, assumptions, and institutions that influence and shape women's lives around the world. It is designed for women in crisis who have had little or no systematic exposure to women's lives in different cultures.

Most cross-cultural material that is taught in primary and secondary schools and communicated through the mass media includes very little information about women. When it does touch on women's experiences, it is frequently riddled with Western/male/white/middle-class biases that tremendously distort the information. Very little material is ever presented from women's point of view, and lesser still from an experiential perspective that integrates an understanding of women's personal lives with their status as a group within their culture and across cultures.

An underlying premise of the course is that in no existing society do women have equal power with men. However, by examining the kinds of social, economic, and political institutions that empower women cross-culturally, women can gain invaluable insights into the forces shaping their own lives. The course was designed with the assumption that women, especially women in crisis, can and will take control over their own lives if they have the necessary support, information, and belief in and vision of how things can be different. Exposing women to the choices or lack of choices available to women in other cultures can often be a nonthreatening way of encouraging women to think in new ways about their own options and what kinds of personal and societal changes could facilitate their exercising these options.

In this way, the course is in large part a consciousness-raising opportunity to explore the basic feminist tenet "the personal is political." The process of the course is far more crucial than the actual content, since the course is not intended to be an information survey course. If each member of the class feels that her experience and perspective is supported and validated, if she begins to think more freely about how change can take place in her own and other women's lives, and if she begins to understand how the forces shaping her life are influenced by the social/political context in which she lives, the course will have accomplished its goals. If enough enthusiasm and curiosity are generated by the discussions, the participants may well continue to explore women's lives in other cultures. Far more crucial, however, is helping women develop their own vision of change and a belief in their ability to create change.

GOALS/OBJECTIVES

The basic goal of the course is to provide a mechanism whereby women can freely think about their own and other women's lives. This can be done by:

- Helping women to see their choices in the context of the institutions and values in the culture that shape their lives.

- Exposing women to options that exist for women in other cultures and to the changes that women have been able to make in their lives.

- Examining the kinds of social structures that give women, individually and collectively, more control over their lives.

Most of the cross-cultural material used in the course is experiential and involves weaving personal experiences with social and political insights. It would be extremely difficult for someone who had not had some form of cross-cultural experience to teach the course effectively. Examples used here are biased toward the experience of this facilitator and are meant only as examples that can be replaced by another facilitator's experience. The course was also designed to be facilitated by feminists. The underlying feminist assumptions influence both the content and process of the course. The course was presented by the feminist activist who drew on her community organizing experience as much as her cross-cultural experience in each class session.

METHODOLOGY

The course was designed to accommodate two factors: the brevity of a six-week time period, and the fluctuating class size. Thus, the course was not structured by categories of cultures but by themes that influence and shape women's lives in all cultures. Although women attending all the sessions could gain a broader perspective and understanding of the issues involved, each session was designed to stand independently. The course was also structured so that the themes could be presented in three two-hour sessions rather than six one-hour sessions.

The topics discussed were:

1. Ethnocentrism. To become conscious and critical of our biases in learning about or discussing people of cultures and racial, ethnic, and class identities different from our own.

2. Matriarchies. To explore our own and others' visions of societies where women held, hold, or could hold equal or greater power than men, and to begin to articulate necessary and desirable changes in women's lives.

3. Women and the Family. To see the different kinds and amounts of control women have over their lives in different family organizations.

4. Women and Work. To see the different relationships of women to paid and unpaid productions, societal resources, service work, and one another while working, and to examine which work and interpersonal relationships give women more control over their lives.

5. Violence against Women. To begin to understand violence against women as a social force that keeps women within socially defined boundaries and to see how women's fight against violence in their lives has been a common and crucial part of social change for women across cultures.

6. Strategies for Change. To explore some of the ways women have created change in their lives in different cultures and to examine the potential effectiveness of these and other strategies for women in this country.

The course was presented at a residential community program for drug- and alcohol-dependent women and at a local women's prison. At the community program, attendance ranged from about six to ten women; four or five came regularly. About half the women were Afro-American or Hispanic, and half were white; all were from poor or working-class backgrounds. Their ages ranged from 18 to 40. The course was presented in three two-hour sessions that often lasted longer. Combining two sessions proved to be very effective with this group. The women constantly made the connections between various issues raised in discussions as well as between their own lives and the lives of the women they were exploring. Discussion of ethnocentrism became a discussion of all the ways in which sexism, racism, and classism touched their lives. This naturally evolved into an exploration of the women's fantasies concerning a society in which these forces no longer controlled their lives. The sessions on women and the family and women and work were easily combined for the obvious reason that so much of women's work lives take place in the family context. Discussing violence against women is extremely difficult unless combined with an "up" at the end, and the only appropriate "up" seemed to be the ways in which women around the world have fought brutality against them. The women commented that the way in which these issues were raised and discussed pulled together many of the themes and questions that had come up in earlier courses.

Class size fluctuated far more at the women's prison -- from one person to about twelve or thirteen. The ages ranged from about 18 to 50; the overall racial composition, though it varied from session to session, was about half Black and half white women, mostly from poor and working-class backgrounds. The material was presented in six sessions that often lasted up to two hours each. These women constantly made connections between the lives of the women they were learning about and their own lives inside and outside the prison. Consequently, the discussions often veered from the planned subject matter to a further exploration of how these issues affected their own lives. Also, the meetings often functioned as consciousness-raising sessions, providing women with an opportunity to express and share their feelings about events and forces affecting their lives inside as well as outside the prison.

Each session lent itself to a broad range of discussions, which proved to be extremely important when working with participants of such a variety of ages and areas of interest. The autonomy of each session also turned out to be crucial at the prison due to the huge fluctuation in attendance.

At both sites, the greatest shortcoming of the course, articulated by the women attending, was that it was too short. Developing trust and familiarity takes time, and at the end of both courses it felt like friendships were just developing and the group was just beginning to synthesize. For women at the prison, especially, where separation and loss is such an oppressive and ever-present part of their experience, it was frustrating.

The general format included discussion generated by some information sharing in the form of readings in class, slide presentations, very brief oral presentations by the facilitator, or other activities designed to initiate participants' perspectives for the purpose of discussion. This experiential format lent itself well to the needs of women at both sites, since it provided the necessary flexibility to encourage discussions in directions most useful and relevant to them. However, if this same course were presented in a secondary school setting, it would require more concrete information sharing on the part of the teacher and more highly structured discussions. Ideas for how this could be done are included with the course outline. The activities and questions discussed here are meant only to stimulate thinking and should not be adhered to if they seem inappropriate for a given group of women.

The course outline is based on and refers to perspectives and analyses that are briefly described in the Resource section. If there is any confusion concerning the activities, and the goals and perspectives they represent, the references listed in the Resource section should provide the necessary background information.

RESOURCES

The following materials were used by students for class sessions and follow-up reading and by the facilitator as background reading. For the latter part of this resource listing we have included an outline of the women-centered perspectives used in pilot teaching the Matriarchy and Women and Work sessions.

In-Class Materials

The following materials were used during the sessions at both sites. They are clearly biased towards the experience of the facilitator in African studies. However, the course outline has been developed to allow any cross-cultural experiences to be used.

Ethnocentrism (session 1). p'Bitek, Okot. Song of Lawino: An African Lament. New York: Meridian Books, 1966.

Women and Work (session 3). Slides of Ewé women in Togo and slides of Peruvian peasant women.

Strategies for Change (session 6). Belden, Jack. "Goldflower's Story." China Shakes the World. Available through New England Free Press, 60 Union Square, Somerville, Mass. 02143.

Follow-up Materials Made Available for Students

Although reading a lot of information was not emphasized, making such information available to the women if they wanted it was also important. The following books and pamphlets were distributed at the end of each session. They were not intended to be read for the next session but to facilitate further exploration of the subject matter. The choice of materials was dictated by the availability and cost. A variety of materials that other facilitators are familiar with could be easily substituted.

Ethnocentrism and Matriarchies (sessions 1 and 2)

Davis, Elizabeth Gould. The First Sex. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1973.
Enrenreich, Barbara, and Deidre English. Witches, Midwives, and Nurses: A History of Women Healers. Old Westbury, N.Y.: The Feminist Press, 1973.

Women and the Family and Women and Work (sessions 3 and 4)

Nwapa, Flora. Efuru. London, Ibadan, and Nairobi: Heinemann Educational Books, 1966.

Violence against Women and Strategies for Change (sessions 5 and 6)

Belden, Jack. "Goldflower's Story," op. cit.

Background Materials for Facilitator

The following references are helpful for general background information.

Ethnocentrism and Matriarchies (sessions 1 and 2)

Bamberger, Joan. "The Myth of Matriarchy: Why Men Rule in Primitive Society." Women, Culture, and Society. Edited by Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974, pp. 263-280.
Ehrenreich, Barbara, and Deidre English. Witches, Midwives and Nurses: A History of Women Healers, op. cit.
Friedl, Ernestine. Women and Men: An Anthropologist's View. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1975.
Mead, Margaret. Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies. New York: Dell Publishing, 1967.
Veblen, Thorstein. Theory of the Leisure Class. Boston, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin, 1972.

Women and the Family and Women and Work (sessions 3 and 4)

Bamberger, Joan. Women, Culture and Society, op. cit.
Boserup, Ester. Women's Role in Economic Development. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1970.
Bourque, Susan C., and Kay B. Warren. "Campesinas and Communeras: Subordination in the Peruvian Andes." Journal of Marriage and the Family, November 1976.
Bourque, Susan C., and Kay B. Warren. "Female Participation, Perception, and Power." Political Participation and the Poor in Latin America. J. Booth and M. Seligson (eds.). New York: Holmes and Meier, 1979.

Cornelisen, Ann. Women of the Shadows: The Wives and Mothers of Southern Italy. New York: Random House (Vintage), 1977.
Diamond, Norma. "Collectivization, Kinship, and the Status of Women in Rural China." Toward an Anthropology of Women. Edited by Rayna Reiter. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975.
Leghorn, Lisa, and Mary Roodkowsky. Who Really Starves? Women and World Hunger. New York: Friendship Press, 1977.
Mandel, William. Soviet Women. New York: Anchor Books, 1975.
Matthiasson, Carolyn J. Many Sisters: Women in Cross-Cultural Perspective. New York: The Free Press, 1974.
Mead, Margaret. Coming of Age in Samoa. New York: Dell Publishing, 1961.
Mernissi, Famita. "Women, Saints, and Sanctuaries." Signs 3: 101-112.
Mueller, Martha. "Women and Men: Power and Powerlessness in Lesotho." Signs 3: 154-166.
Murphy, Yolanda, and Robert F. Women of the Forest. New York: Columbia University Press, 1974.
Reita, Rayna, ed. Toward an Anthropology of Women, op. cit.
Sibisi, Harriet. "How African Women Cope with Migrant Labor in South Africa." Signs 3: 167-177.

Role-Playing Session on the Family

Southern Italy: Cornelisen, Ann. Women of the Shadows: The Wives and Mothers of Southern Italy, op. cit.
Hinton, William. Fanshen: A Documentary of Revolution in a Chinese Village. New York: 1968.

Violence against Women and Strategies for Change (sessions 5 and 6)

Belden, Jack. "Goldflower's Story," op. cit.
Brownmiller, Susan. Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape. New York: Bantam Books, 1975.
Hinton, William. op. cit.
Hoshen, Fran, ed. Win News. 186 Grant St., Lexington, Mass. 02173.
Leghorn, Lisa. "Violence against Women: A Cross-Cultural Feminist Perspective." Wife Battering. American Friends Service Committee, 2161 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, Mass. 02140.
Leghorn, Lisa, and Kathy Parker. "Women in the Economy: A Cross-Cultural Perspective." Available from Kathy Parker, 115 Museum St., Somerville, Mass. 02143. (Includes an exploration of the strategies used by women in cultures with minimal negotiating power.)
Murphy, Yolanda, and Robert F.. Women of the Forest, op. cit. (For a discussion of gang rape in Mundurucu culture.)
Russell, Diana. Crimes against Women: The Proceedings of the International Tribunal. Milbrae, Calif.: Les Femmes, 1976.
Warrior, Betsy. "Battered Lives." Houseworkers' Handbook. 1974. Available from 46 Pleasant Street, Cambridge, Mass. 02139.

Women-Centered Perspectives Used in Pilot Teaching

The following perspectives were especially useful in presenting alternatives for thinking about women's actual and potential roles in society. They are also helpful in countering such assumptions as women are incapable of ruling because of immutable qualities resulting from biological, intellectual, or psychological inferiority to men. The discussions of the following concepts in the sources cited should prove useful to anyone presenting this course.

1. Have women been subordinate to men from the beginning?

   - The evolutionary view: man the hunter and creator of culture.
     Slocum, Sally. "Woman the Gatherer: Male Bias in Anthropology." Toward an Anthropology of Women. Rayna Reita, op. cit., p. 363. (Also excellent for ethnocentrism discussion.)
   - The biblical view: Adam and Eve
     Bible, Genesis.

2. Women had power early in human evolution, but this power was overturned.

   Davis, Elizabeth Gould. The First Sex, op. cit.
   Engels, Fredrick. The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State. New York: International Publishers, 1972.
   Morgan, Elaine. The Descent of Woman. New York: Stein and Day (Bantam), 1972.

3. Women have had power equivalent to men in other cultures.*
   Facilitators should present a range of information to show that equivalence is a common pattern.

   - Iroquois
     Brown. "Iroquois Women." Toward an Anthropology of Women, op. cit., pp. 235-251.
     Wallace, Anthony F. C. Death and Rebirth of the Seneca. Random House (Vintage), 1972. An example of a society where women had control over a crucial resource: agriculture.
   - Mbuti Pygmies
     Turnbull, Colin. The Forest People. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1962. An example of a society where there is a minimum of sexual division of labor and a sharing of decision making and leadership roles.
     Draper, Patricia. "!Kung Women: Contrasts in Sexual Egalitarianism in Foraging and Sedentary Contexts." Toward an Anthropology of Women. Rayna Reiter, op. cit., pp. 77-111.
   - Mundurucu
     Murphy, Yolanda, and Robert F. Women of the Forest, op. cit. An example of a society where women have strong kin networks and a separate value system.
   - Ewé
     Leghorn, Lisa. "Women in the Economy: A Cross-Cultural Perspective," op. cit. An example where women are economically independent, with strong networks and important religious roles and divinities. (Other West African societies could be used, e.g., Ashanti, Yoruba.)

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* In comparing these societies, discussion should deal with what is meant by "equivalent power." Women and men rarely have identical sources of power or identical access to crucial resources. Nevertheless, different kinds of power can be considered equivalent. It is also necessary to make the distinction between a group's survival strategies and strategies for social change. Discussion should also clarify the difference between a group's exercise of power and a group's development of strategies to limit the power exercised upon it (cf. Bourque and Warren, "Female Participation, Perception, and Power," and "Campesinas and Communeras: Subordination in the Peruvian Andes.")

4. Matriarchy as a political vision.

- Whether or not matriarchies have existed or women have had completely equivalent power in other societies, there is value in looking forward and defining matriarchy as a vision of what is possible. In part, a matriarchal vision would include women controlling their own lives and having a basis for defining what is valuable, setting limits for behavior, and negotiating with others over crucial decisions.
  Webster. "Matriarchy: A Vision of Power." Toward an Anthropology of Women. Rayna Reiter, op. cit., pp. 141-156.

A Women-Centered Understanding of Work (session 4)

We found the following categories for a women-centered understanding of work (see Leghorn and Parker, op. cit.) useful in rethinking and questioning women's involvement in work. Contrasting Groups A, B, and C provides striking examples for discussion about which institutions help or hinder women's acquisition and use of power in society.

Group A. Societies in which women have minimal power, control over their lives, access to crucial resources, and opportunity to establish women's networks.

Southern Italy:	Cornelisen, Ann. Women of the Shadows: The Wives and Mothers of Southern Italy, op. cit.
Ethiopians:	Bulti, A. (unpublished thesis available from Goddard-Cambridge, 186 Hampshire St., Cambridge, Mass. 02139.)
Algerians:	Rowbotham, Sheila. Women, Resistance, and Revolution. New York: Vintage Books, 1972, pp. 236-240.
Peruvians:	Bourque and Warren. "Campesinas and Communeras: Subordination in the Peruvian Andes," op. cit.
Japanese:	Cresey, E. H. Daughters of Changing Japan. New York: Farras, Straus and Cudahy, 1955.
	Takashi, Koyama. The Changing Position of Women in Japan. Paris: UNESCO, 1961.
South African Blacks:	Mueller, Martha. "Women and Men: Power and Powerlessness in Lesotho," op. cit.

Group B. Societies in which women have token power, some control over aspects of their lives, and some access to crucial resources, or are able to create some alternative networks.

Cuba:	Cuba Review, no. 2. P.O. Box 206, Cathedral Station, New York, N.Y. 10025.
Sweden:	Dahlstrom, Edmund. The Changing Roles of Men and Women. Boston: Beacon Press, 1971.
	Limner, Brigitta. "What Does Equality between the Sexes Imply?" American Journal of Orthopsychiatry 41 (October 1971).

Group C. Societies in which women have (or historically had) power over major institutions affecting them, where women have control over crucial resources, and where (in some cases) women are able to create women-centered networks as alternative institutions.

Iroquois:	Brown. "Iroquois Women," op. cit.
Mbuti Pygmies:	Turnbull, Colin. The Forest People, op. cit.
!Kung Bushmen:	Draper, Patricia. !Kung Women, op. cit.
	Friedl, Ernestine. Women and Men, op. cit.
Ewe:	Leghorn, Lisa. "Women in the Economy: A Cross-Cultural Perspective," op. cit.
Bari:	Brown. "Iroquois Women," op. cit.
	Buenquentura, op. cit.
Chinese:	Belden, Jack. "Goldflower's Story," op. cit.
	Dimond, Norma. "Collectivization, Kinship, and the Status of Women in Rural China," op. cit.
	Hinton, William. Fashen: A Documentary of Revolution in a Chinese Village, op. cit.

Rachel Burger/CPF

CONTENT

SESSION 1: Ethnocentrism

Goals: To give an idea of how we use ourselves as the measure of societies rather than understanding them in their own terms.

To examine the interests that are served by ethnocentric and white or male supremacist views that portray other societies and people as "primitive" versus "civilized," "stagnant" versus "progressive," "developed" versus "underdeveloped," "rational" versus "emotional."

To begin to view institutions, value systems, and other forms in the context of the society as a whole; to learn not to make value judgments when comparing institutions in different societies without understanding their role within each society as a whole.

There are four types of activities that can be used with participants, depending on their interests and the length of class time.

Activity. Describe to the participants two unnamed societies. The first should be a culture such as traditional Ewé culture in West Africa, where there is little or no violent crime such as murder, rape, and wife beating, and no prisons or police. Disputes are settled collectively. Women are economically independent and are represented at the council of elders by a queen mother. In this society there are no great extremes in income distribution. Religion plays a strong role in governing people's behavior: people believe that their ancestors as well as a number of divinities are always aware of their actions, and they hold themselves accountable to these unseen forces. In this society there is typically no running water or electricity; few people own automobiles or other technological products.

As a second unnamed society, one could describe life in the U.S., where there is a great deal of violent crime, including crimes against women, and never enough prisons, police, or court personnel. Disputes are settled through a highly bureaucratic, hierarchical, and lengthy criminal justice process. There are great extremes in poverty and wealth. Most women are economically dependent on their husbands, and earn only 56 percent of what men earn. Women comprise only 2 percent of elected politicians. Religion plays an increasingly minimal role in people's lives. Most families have running water, electricity, and gas in their homes. Many own automobiles. The country is highly competitive in designing military hardware and other technology.

Questions/Issues. After describing these two unnamed cultures, the facilitator might ask questions such as:

- Which culture is "primitive" and which is "civilized"?
- What do we mean by "primitive" and "civilized"?

- Do these definitions describe the morality and values of a society or its technological development?
- Why does our country use the degree of technological development as a standard to evaluate and define other cultures?

Participants will hopefully arrive at a better understanding of their own value systems and the extent to which they use their own culture as a standard of "civilization."

Activity. The facilitator might give definitions or descriptions of the following terms and ask participants to choose which they would use when discussing a Western (class-stratified, industrialized) society versus a non-Western (nontechnological) society. The facilitator might say, "a system of beliefs that explains life and death." The participants choose the appropriate words they associate with each kind of society. The list of terms might include:

religion	superstition
science	magic
	witchcraft
doctors	witch doctors
	curers
	sorcerers
clothing	costumes
houses	huts
citizens	tribes
people	natives
	indigens

Questions/Issues. Participants can discuss the origin of their biases, which are reflected in the different terminologies they chose.

Activity. The facilitator might read a brief description of an aspect of Western society, written by someone from a very different culture, that makes value judgments about Western culture based on incomplete information. (For example, see Song of Lawino by p'Bitek.)

Activity. Have participants list, on a continuum, those qualities and traits ascribed to "civilized" society, and, underneath, those for "primitive" society.* Have participants make similar lists of traits for people who are male and female, white and black, adult and child, upper class and lower class, and for class-stratified societies and hunters and gatherers. Look at the lists side by side--many of the adjectives will be similar. Participants can consider such questions as:

- What are the parallels in stereotypes and patterns of thought?
- What are the ways in which these stereotypes become self-fulfilling? Why?
- What interests are served by maintaining these dichotomies?

*See the sample on the next page.

Civilized	Male	White	Adult	Upper Class	Class-Stratified

Rational
Independent
Technological →
In control
etc.

Primitive	Female	Black	Child	Lower Class	Hunters & Gatherers

Dependent
Irrational
Simple →
Emotional
etc.

Sample Activity: Ascribed Characteristics

(session 1)

The facilitator could summarize the values inherent in a patriarchal world view and show how men and women have fundamentally different world views. She might also point out that women have only begun to understand what a woman-centered world view would be like.

Summary of Session. All four of the above activities were used at both sites and proved extremely effective. The discussion evolved into an analysis of the sexual and racial forces affecting the women's lives, and the white and male bias they constantly confront. This male-centered bias makes for great discrepancies between the world as it is described in the literature and media of the dominant culture and the world as women know and experience it. Thus, the emphasis was on validating the perceptions and experiences of the women in the course.

SESSION 2: Matriarchy: Did Women Ever Rule Society? What Would Society Look Like if We Did?

Goals: To develop the vocabulary for different positions women have in a society (i.e., powerful, powerless, inferior, superior, subordinate, equal, and so on).

To show the range of arguments made to describe and explain women's positions in societies throughout the world.

To describe societies in which women have power equivalent to men's.

To develop ideas about alternative ways of organizing society in which women would be power holders and discuss the implications of these alternatives.

Activity. Begin talking about matriarchy and the myth of the Amazon warriors with pictures and illustrations of these women.

Activity. Present the perspectives outlined in the Resource session that attempt to justify women's inferior status. The facilitator might ask participants why people argue that women are inferior.

Activity. Discuss the different societies in which women have control over decisions affecting their life choices.

Activity. Through class discussion or in small groups, create alternative matriarchal societies -- participants can give full vent to their creative energies. Once several models have emerged, discuss the differences between:

- a society in which the power relationships of our own society are simply reversed;
- a society that is organized around women's values;
- a society in which women and men have equivalent power.

At the conclusion of the session, participants can evaluate the relative merits of the different matriarchies and decide which they prefer and why.

Summary of Session. At the community program, a critique of Western/white/male bias evolved spontaneously into a discussion of the women's fantasies of what the world would be like if women had organized power. The values and institutions identified as desirable were cooperative and nurturing; i.e., organized around female values. At the prison, the discussion led in a similar direction. The second goal of this session and the first two activities were barely touched upon, since the women were so involved with the other subject matter. However, if a facilitator has more time and is working in a more highly structured environment, especially at the secondary school level, she might be able to pursue this material.

SESSION 3: Women and Work

Goals: To explore a woman-centered view of work, production, and control.

To understand the broad similarities in women's work throughout the world.

To describe the diversity of cultural values attached to women's work dealing with domestic maintenance and child care.

To explore the influence of the following factors on women's power and authority in economic, political, and religious institutions of various societies:

- high valuation of women's fertility;
- broad participation in the labor force;
- access to and control of crucial resources.

Activity. Slides can be shown of at least one society in each of the three categories of women's power defined in the Resource section. For each society the facilitator should present short descriptions of women's work inside and outside the domestic sphere and the social evaluation of women's work.

Questions/Issues. In each case the group can consider the extent to which women control their own lives, the access women have to important resources, and the possibilities women have for creating alternative institutions such as women's communication and support networks.

Activity. After the slides, further discuss women's control in societies such as Cuba, Sweden, the Soviet Union, the United States, and China. In these cultures, women have some control over aspects of their lives and are integrated in varying degrees into the public labor force. In several of these societies women have created alternative, women-centered institutions. Nevertheless, women are not paid for their work in the home, nor are they granted equivalent access to crucial institutions.

Questions/Issues. After presenting more information on these societies, the facilitator might ask participants what they believe would happen to women's organizations if governmental or societal support disappeared. What would happen to women's status if there were no autonomous women's organizations pushing for change? Participants could also consider what transformations in the economies would have to take place to ensure women equal status and to give them a negotiating tool, should societal support diminish.

Summary of Session. At both sites there was only time to present slides of one culture (the Ewé culture), since the participants were very involved in the presentation and asked many questions relating what they were learning about the culture to their own lives. The concept of creating networks was most popular and led into a discussion of the history of women's organizing and striking in this country. A range of cross-cultural comparisons was not presented given the time constraints. The activities described here could easily take weeks if a facilitator had the time to explore some of the topics in depth.

SESSION 4: Women and the Family

Goals: To show the great variety in the organization and functions of family units in different societies by comparing nuclear, extended, matrifocal, and polygamous families.

To explore the influence of different family organizations on women's power, authority, and ability to build women-centered networks.

To show the influence of economic change on the organization and functions of families.

Activity. This session involves role playing to help participants understand how family organization influences family disputes and problem solving. Participants should be given specific positions within the family. Background information for each role play should include:

- descriptions of the relations individuals have to one another by generation, age, sex, and authority in the household;
- descriptions of the activities performed by women together, those performed by men together, and those men and women perform jointly;
- the extent to which men and women in the society share or have distinct values, perceptions, and strategies for behavior.

Questions/Issues. After "members" of the family have enough background information, a problem appropriate to the culture should be presented for the family to deal with. The whole class can discuss what options family members have in resolving the problem. Or, those involved in the role play can act out their approaches to the problem. Finally, everyone can discuss the most likely outcome. the decision, and its implications for women's lives in the society.

Examples of role-play situations follow.

1. Ewé Role Play

The Problem. Ama's husband Kodjo married a second wife, Aku, one year ago, and Aku is not yet pregnant. Aku is very jealous of Ama's two healthy children and accuses Ama of using sorcery to make her sterile. At first Ama ignores Aku's accusations, but as they become increasingly bitter and rumors start to spread throughout their village, she speaks to Kodjo about the problem, saying that something must be done. Kodjo, Kodjo's mother, and Aku's mother all speak with Aku, but she becomes increasingly irrational and will listen to no one. Finally, they decide to hold a family tribunal, at which both Ama and Aku present their sides of the story and the family decides by consensus what is to be done.

Cultural Context. In traditional Ewé society, most couples live in large compounds with members of their extended families. Ewé society is patrilineal and patrilocal, although living arrangements tend to be flexible, and women without husbands (single, divorced, or widowed) usually live with female family members. Marriage is both a social and economic institution, designed to unite two family lineages and produce children, who are highly valued both as inheritors of Ewé culture and as workers. Consequently, polygamous marriages have traditionally been aspired to by men because of the possibilities for wealth and social status inherent in multiple-family unions. However, a husband must be able to maintain a compound that can support everyone. Consequently, only the more wealthy men are able to afford more than one wife.

Relations between men and women are for the purpose of raising children and surviving economically. Women and men relate to each other far more formally than women and women, and the sexes do not interact a great deal in work or social life. Since such a high value is placed on the bearing of children, women without children are not sought after as wives and are in fact stigmatized. If no one else will marry them, and if their families will not take them in because they become too troublesome (in response to their position as outcasts), the village chief is required to take them as his wives.

Women's social resources are grounded in:

- Their economic independence: women are given their own fields when they marry and often trade or sell what they've produced at the marketplace.
- Their social networks: both inside and outside families, women work together, exchange news with one another, go to older women for help in resolving problems and conflicts, and go to the village queen mother if a problem is too grave for a family member to be able to help.
- Their religious status: not only are half the spiritual entities that the Ewé people look to for protection female, but over half the initiates in the traditional religion are women. Women are frequently spiritual as well as physical healers and sorceresses, and have psychic and supernatural skills that are highly respected and sometimes feared.

People found guilty of any crime or insult at a tribunal face consequences ranging from a sincere apology, to working for the victim in compensation, to giving a ceremony to atone for their "sins."

2. Mundurucu Role Play

The Problem. A man and a woman argue over whether to have another child.

Cultural Context. The Mundurucu are horticulturalists and hunters in the Amazon Basin. Households are composed of a grandmother, her daughters, and their children. Women in these matrifocal networks live and work cooperatively in the fields and in the manioc processing shed, and spend free time together. Men marry into these networks by joining the village of their wives. Husbands live together in a men's house reserved for all the men in the village. Men feel they dominate women in this patrilineal society, where they control the hunting and religious ceremonies and the offspring insure the continuity of the male line. Women have very low commitments to these patrilineages and the religious celebrations of patrilineal ancestors. In dealing with a dispute over perpetuating her husband's lineage, a woman has the option of refusing her husband's advances, secretely practicing contraception (which only women know about), or consulting older and more experienced kinswomen who will have ideas for solving the dispute. Husbands come and go, but what is important to these women is the continuity of their own households.

This example is important because in Mundurucu society men and women have clearly different value systems. Also, with increasing involvement in Western market economies, the Mundurucu families are breaking up, as men and their wives move to new areas where they tap rubber and have access to consumer goods. These changes, which women ironically appear to favor, tend to produce nuclear families instead of the matrifocal extended networks. Participants might be asked to do a second role play, treating the same dispute in the new nuclear family. Women no longer will have several generations of female kin to consult in the household, nor will they have access to crucial resources through cooperative farming.

Summary of Session. The women seemed to enjoy doing the role plays. Often they fell into Western modes of thinking and behaving which the other women pointed out to them. In many ways, the attempt at role playing was the most effective mechanism for understanding a new culture from the inside out. The women were constantly forced to confront how many of their assumptions are grounded in their own culture. This, in turn, offered them entirely new ways of thinking about their own behavioral constraints and options. Again, there was not the time to pursue the second role play, which probably would have led to even more cross-cultural insights.

SESSION 5: Violence against Women

Goals: To examine violence against women as a social institution.

To examine, by looking at three kinds of violence against women, the ways in which violence acts as a mode of social control and fosters dependence. The three kinds of violence are:

- violence against women's reproductive functions and sexuality, such as clitoridectomies, infibulation, sterilization abuse, mastectomies, hysterectomies, and so on;
- institutional violence such as violent behavior modification wards, mental institutions, and prisons; and
- sexual terrorism and power such as rape, battering, sexual harassment at the workplace, sexual abuse of children, witch burnings, and so on.

Activity. One might begin with a discussion by the facilitator of these different forms of violence against women, with examples from different cultures and their effects on women in those cultures. Participants could then make a list of things that a woman might do before she is raped (e.g., go out for a walk alone at night, let a man who asked her for help into her apartment to make a phone call, and a list of those things that she would hesitate to do or would no longer do after she is raped.

Questions/Issues. Participants can discuss how this violence may affect the woman's relations with others, her place in society, and her perception of her options. Participants can also list how rape and the threat of rape affects women in two different societies, for example the Mundurucu and the U.S. Discussion might focus on the similarities in rape as an institution in the two societies and how women are affected.

Summary of Session. At the community program, the overview discussion led to a discussion by the women of their experiences with sterilization abuse and the medical profession in general. At both sites, the women all spoke of their experiences with battering. In many ways this session was similar to support groups held formally or informally at shelters for battered women. The women were very supportive of one another, and the discussion at both sites evolved naturally into an examination of women's current options for dealing with violence in their lives.

SESSION 6: Strategies for Change

Goals: To examine those factors that prevent women from controlling, individually or collectively, any portion of their social, economic, political, and religious lives.

To consider which cultural contexts make both individual and collective change for women possible.

To examine the process of mystification, whereby one accepts a definition of reality that differs from one's own perception.

To consider the process whereby an individual dares to accept her own perception as real, thereby confronting the implications of that reality.

Activity. The class could read from "Goldflower's Story" and discuss the differences between how women in China have made changes in their lives and how women in this country have been/are making changes. They might also consider how options for reform and change vary depending on whether there is support for new thinking as in China, or if women are psychologically, socially, or physically punished when trying to make change on an individual or collective level, as in this country.

Questions/Issues. The facilitator should be aware of the goals of each of the previous sessions. Try to tie together the themes of empowerment with the analysis that has been developed by the participants.

Summary of Session. At both sites, this was perhaps the liveliest discussion, integrating the women's personal and collective experiences with the process of making changes in their lives, and with their fantasies of how more changes could occur. Alternatives ranged from organizing women's vigilante groups to protect women to creating women-run, women-centered institutions. Several of the women expressed an interest in becoming involved with feminist groups in their communities to work for changes of special interest to them.

SUMMARY

By exposing women to the choices or lack of choices available to women in other cultures, the course encourages women to understand in a cultural context the forces shaping their own lives. By stimulating women to think about their lives and offering validation for their experiences and a vision of change, the course can also act as an impetus for social change.

Women in Prison

CONNIE BREECE has been involved with the issues and concerns of institutionalized women since 1974. She directed an educational program at a local women's prison from 1975 to 1977, and has taught courses on women in institutions in several community schools and alternative educational settings. Currently she is working with several community and women's groups on issues of institutional violence.

Women in Prison

The six-session course Women in Prisons* was presented in the winter and spring of 1978 at two high school settings in the metropolitan Boston area. It was based on a familiarity with the literature of and about women in prison as well as experience in advocacy work with women prisoners.

My work around the issues of women in prison has led me to believe firmly that most women who are in prison should not be incarcerated. Most are not a "danger" to society and most are being psychologically damaged rather than "rehabilitated" in the prison experience. Of the 15,000 women who are imprisoned in this country, the overwhelming majority are poor women who are unable to make their bail or women who are serving short sentences for crimes of an economic nature; i.e., acts that involve the acquisition of money. Most women who go to prison are poor, Black, and Third World women with children.

The opinion that most women should not be in prison influences my teaching. It leads me in the direction of activities that will help participants examine their own conceptions about women prisoners and to discussions about alternatives to entering prison in the first place, rather than to discussions about how prisons can be made more "functional and relevant" to women's lives. Facilitators must be sensitive to the ways in which a woman's class background, race, and sex alienates her from the value system of our white, male, middle-class culture, the group of people that makes the social policy that sends her to prison.

I have found it essential to view the criminal justice system as a microcosm of the larger workings of sex, race, and class discrimination in our culture. One has only to sit in a courtroom for a day, or be inside of a prison for a short while, to see that the majority of people who come into contact with the criminal justice system are young, non-white, and certainly not wealthy. Teaching a course about women in prison cannot be separated from a larger cultural analysis.

Women in prison are truly a "forgotten" group. Even in discussions about the issues and needs of prisoners in general, the focus is usually upon men. Women are either ignored or improperly represented in the media, and are ignored in prison program funding and in literature about prisons. This particular curriculum has been developed in response to the distorted bits of information that are filtered to us about women in prison. Although I recognize that all prisoners are victimized and damaged by the prison experience, women prisoners must live with the additional burden of sexism in their daily lives. Therefore, their experiences as prisoners are unique. The activities and discussions raised in this curriculum have been developed with the particular experiences of women prisoners in mind.

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*The focus in this particular course is upon women in prisons rather than upon women in other types of institutions, such as mental institutions. For a thorough explanation of the parallels and differences, see the Methodology section.

GOALS/OBJECTIVES

The basic goals of this course are:

1. To place the experience of women in prison today in a historical perspective.

2. To explore participants' basic assumptions about crime, the "criminal" lifestyle, prisoners, and the entire criminal justice system.

3. To look at the myths about women prisoners and to break down some of these myths through information and discussion. Hopefully, participants will have enough information to look critically at the information received from the media concerning prisoners, and to participate in discussions about prisoners and prisons in a way that does not perpetuate current myths.

4. To give participants a sense of the effects of day-to-day institutionalized life on prisoners, friends, families, children, and their futures through the writings and other creative works of women prisoners.

5. To acquaint participants with the juvenile justice system and the particular ways in which it effects young women.

6. To stimulate discussion of a society where there are no prisons, alternatives to locking people away, and creative alternatives to prison for women.

Learning about this group of women can be an exciting experience. Looking at the lives of women prisoners is a way to focus upon the experiences of a small group of women in the context of the experiences of all women within a male-oriented culture.

METHODOLOGY

Although this curriculum is concerned with the experiences and writings of women in prison, there are other groups of women living in controlled environments for whom the same facts, issues, and indignities are true. Women living in psychiatric institutions, pretrial units, and other environments where day-to-day life is tightly monitored have much in common with women prisoners: a lack of educational and vocational opportunities; health care abuses; separation from family, friends, children, and community; poverty; racism; sexism; and strong behavior modification "treatment" techniques.

A facilitator with more knowledge of the structure and function of psychiatric institutions can mold these activities to fit the lives of women in those places. They can look at the history of women in psychiatric institutions, examine their day-to-day lives, and look at the political and personal writings of female psychiatric and ex-psychiatric inmates. Each activity can be adapted for this purpose. For example, the second session on "What Is Really Criminal?" can focus on the question of "What Is Really Sane or Not Sane?" and thus explore participants' feelings and beliefs about "mental health" and "mental illness."

Although this particular course was offered in a high school setting with structured, one-hour sessions, one-day seminars or workshops are also extremely effective. Participants have a greater opportunity to develop their thoughts and there is more time available for in-class writing. Also, the sessions are designed as individual, self-contained units; that is, one session does not necessarily rely upon the information contained in the previous session to make it workable. It is helpful, however, if some participants attend all sessions.

RESOURCES

SESSION 1

"Profile" statistics:

Periodically, the Female Offender Resource Center, through the National Offender Services Coordination Program of the American Bar Association in Washington, D.C., conducts statistical "profiles" of women in the criminal justice system. Their reports can be obtained by writing to the Resource Center or the American Bar Association directly. These statistics are obtained through privately and publicly funded studies, FBI records, and original research.

History of women in prison:

Anyone wishing to learn about the history of women in prison should begin by reading Doris Klein's "Etiology of Female Crime: A Review of the Literature" in Issues in Criminology 27 (fall 1973). Klein brings a feminist perspective to the few, biased studies that have been conducted.

Historical comparisons 1879 to 1978:

For information concerning women in prison in Massachusetts in 1879, I used the 1879 Senate Report Number 51 to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts concerning the first year of operation of the Sherbourne Reformatory, now the Massachusetts Correctional Institution for Women at Framingham. Facilitators in other regions can do their own research in libraries, legislative records, and prison research departments where accessible. I provide some brief statistics here that will enable a facilitator to conduct the historical activity should this research be impossible. According to the report, women were imprisoned in Massachusetts in 1879 for the following reasons:

Offense	Number of Women
Adultery	22
Common Drunkard	161
Common Night Walker	147
Idle and Disorderly	143
Lewd, Wanton, and Lascivious	57
Vagabonds	26
Vagrancy	47
Others	
Arson	2
Assault	19
Assault and Larceny	1
Burglary	1
Manslaughter	2
Robbery	1
Stillborn Child	1
Abortion	1

These statistics are a clear representation of the sexual nature of most women's "crime," the oppression of poor women, and the general lack of violent crime by women in a historical context. Other historical information concerning the imprisonment and punishment of women is available in Ehrenreich's and English's Witches, Midwives, and Nurses: A History of Women Healers, 1973, The Feminist Press, SUNY, Box 334, Old Westbury, N.Y. 11568.

SESSION 2

For the "What Is Really 'Criminal'" activity, I adapted an exercise concerning participants' perceptions of "crime" from Changing Learning/Changing Lives: A High School Women's Studies Curriculum, developed by teachers and students at the Group School in Cambridge, Mass. This material is also available through the Feminist Press. The activity was adapted with permission from the Group School curriculum section entitled "Mean Streets."

SESSION 3

I used a videotape about women prisoners made by women prisoners at the Massachusetts Correctional Institution for Women at Framingham. This is one of several tapes made at MCI Framingham over the past two years through the cooperation of Mediaworks, Inc., 96 Munroe Street, Somerville, Mass. These tapes serve as a vehicle through which women prisoners discuss their lives, their concerns, and their frustrations about the prison experience. Facilitators can write to: Linda DiRocco, c/o Mediaworks, for further information.

Also, a complete listing of videotapes made by and about women prisoners can be obtained by writing to Resources for Community Change, P.O. Box 21066, Washington, D.C. 20009.

The Women's Bail Fund in Cambridge, Mass. is currently developing a slide show on current issues in the lives of women in prison and pretrial women. Information can be obtained by writing to the Women's Bail Fund at the Old Cambridge Baptist Church, 1151 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, Mass. 02138.

SESSION 4

There are several women prisoner publications in different areas of the country:

The Turning Point. Box 99, Framingham, Mass. 01701. Attn: Andrea Loewenstein, education.

Through the Looking Glass: A Women's and Children's Prison Newsletter. Available through the Gay Community Social Services, P.O. Box 22228, Seattle, Wash. 98122.

Break de Chains of Legalized U.S. Slavery. P.O. Box 27, Durham, N.C. 27703. $2.00 each. Make checks to: North Carolina Women's Prison Book.

Voices from Within: The Poetry of Women in Prison. Ann McGovern, editor. Weston, Conn: Magic Circle Press, 1975.

I would suggest facilitators try to find women prisoners' writings in their own regions, or write to Rescurces for Community Change and ask for their complete listing of women prisoner publications.

Defense committees for women political prisoners are also resources for the writings of women prisoners. For the addresses of the defense committees of political prisoners, write to the National Prison Project of the American Civil Liberties Union Foundation, 1346 Connecticut Avenue, NW., Suite 1031, Washington, D.C. 20036. (C/o Jill Raymond or Peggy Wiesenberg.)

I suggest facilitators presenting this course with a focus on women in psychiatric institutions contact State and Mind, P.O. Box 99, West Somerville, Mass. for articles written by women psychiatric inmates. (Formerly Rough Times/ Radical Therapist.)

SESSION 5

For a thorough history of the beginnings of juvenile delinquency in this country, read Tony Platt's The Child Savers, University of Chicago Press, 1969. For use in class, read an article by Meda Chesney-Lind entitled "Juvenile Delinquency: The Sexualization of the Female Crime" in Psychology Today, July 1974, p. 43.

SESSION 6

Facilitators wishing to gain a perspective on prison abolitionist ideology should read Instead of Prisons: A Handbook for Abolitionists, available from the Prison Research Education Action Project, Faculty Press, Brooklyn, N.Y., 1976. This will be helpful background information for discussions about real alternatives to imprisonment for women.

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"Women in Prison." Mother Lode (entire issue), no. 2, April 1972.
Women: A Journal of Liberation (entire issue) 3 (1973).

CONTENT

SESSION 1: Myths about Women in Prison

Goals: To place the situation of women in prison today in a historical perspective.

To discuss and begin to break down the myths about women in prison.

This session is a good way to begin looking at the situation of women in prison within the larger context of crime and imprisonment in our society. Women in prison are a very isolated group. Like most isolated groups in society, they are encumbered by a variety of myths that prevent people from understanding the reality behind the stereotypes. Television conceptions of crime and prisoners, and what we learn from our parents and schools about prostitutes, drug addicts, shoplifters, and so on, shape the way we think about people in prison. The following activities ask questions such as: why are women in prison? and who are women in prison? I found very quickly that not only did participants know little about women in prison, but much of what they did know was learned from the popular media. Participants were very enthusiastic about these activities at both sites.

Activity. Start off with a brief historical perspective of women in prison. The best way to give a sense of the social forces that influence who goes to prison is to show the participants what types of women were in prison 100 years ago. Since little has been written about the history of women in prison, I researched this information at a local women's prison. See the Resource section.

Questions/Issues. Historical information is useful because it shows a population of women in prison entirely different from today. At the turn of the century, over 98% of the women in prison were foreign-born, Irish, white, working-class factory workers. There are few such women in prison today. Women were primarily incarcerated for crimes relating to their sexuality (prostitution, common nightwalking) or their public behavior (drunkenness) rather than for crimes of violence. Providing this kind of information stimulates a discussion of the ways that prison populations change over time and the reasons for these changes. Also, ask participants to project ahead one hundred years about the women prisoner population.

In addition to discussing the historical information listed in the Resource section, facilitators may want to talk about the historical treatment of women who have deviated from society and been punished for their practices. The best source of information I have found is the pamphlet entitled Witches, Midwives, and Nurses by Barbara Ehrenreich and Dierdre English.

A Note about Statistics. The information provided for these activities pertains to Massachusetts; statistics will vary for each State or region. In some states in the Midwest and West, for example, there are many more Native American and Chicana women in prison than in the East. Facilitators should try to obtain

statistics about the women prisoners in their own vicinity to make the information as relevant as possible to the participants. Figures for different areas can also be compared. The best resources for national overview statistics are listed in the Resource section.

Activity. Ask participants to brainstorm all the characteristics that they think apply to women in prison today. Ask: what is the average age of women prisoners? Are they mothers? List all the suggestions on the board under the heading What We Think. Then, list facts next to each item on the list. For each item, ask the question: where did we get this idea -- from our parents, the media, our friends? This activity shows that a lot of information is withheld about women in prison.

Questions/Issues. During one session the board looked like this:

What We Think	Facts
Age: Women in prison are young.	Most women in prison are young, ranging from age 17 to 24. However, women prisoners at a local women's prison in Massachusetts range from 17 to 55.
Race: Half of women prisoners are Black and half are white. About 10% are Chinese.	In Massachusetts, 40% of all prisoners are Black. (The Black population of the state is 17%.) Chinese women are rarely imprisoned.
Parental status: Women in prison don't have children.	Of women in prison, 80-90% are mothers.
Women in prison haven't gone to school.	The average grade completed by women prisoners in Massachusetts is the eighth.
Women in prison don't have money.	True. Women prisoners are poor and usually go to prison for trying to get money.
Women earn money in prison.	Women earn little money in prison and rarely enough to save. In an eight-hour workday they can earn as little as 50¢.

Activity. Once participants become aware that women in prison are mostly young, poorly educated, Black and Third World mothers, ask participants to brainstorm all the reasons why they think women go to prison. Again, obtain local statistics for your area or refer to the Massachusetts and national figures.

The list for this activity usually looks like this:

Why Do We Think Women Go to Prison?	Why Are Women Really in Prison?
murder	drugs
assault and battery	prostitution
child abuse	shoplifting
prostitution	larceny
drugs	receiving stolen goods
robbery	forgery
	bad checks
	murder - manslaughter

After the list is complete, ask participants to write down the percentages of how many women they think are in prison for each particular crime. Next, fill in the percentages on the second list. At both sites participants thought that 50% of women in prison are there for crimes involving victims (murder, child abuse, assault and battery), 25% for drugs, and 25% for prostitution. The reality is that the overwhelming majority are there for crimes involving money -- well under 5% are there for violent crimes.

Summary of Session. These activities may seem elementary, but I have found that it is impossible for participants to understand the lives, writings, and problems of women in prison unless they first develop a clear mental image of women as prisoners and begin to see them as real people. For example, when we talked about the effect of imprisonment on young mothers who are separated from their children and families, one of the participants asked about the relationship of the prisoners to their own mothers. This led into a discussion of the participants' relationship with their mothers which reinforced what had been said at the start of the session: that our personal family relationships are extremely valuable to us and that this major support system is stripped from people who spend time in prison. For these high school women to consider the separation feelings that many women in prison must face was valuable.

Another direction to take is to discuss what is meant by "economic crimes." In a capitalist society where competition among disparate groups for the acquisition of money is encouraged and where large amounts of capital are obtained by only a few, many of the ways in which money is obtained are illegal. When some people try to get more money "illegally" (such as corporate businessmen embezzling money from banks), it is "clean crime" or "white collar crime," and part of the "free enterprise" system. When other groups of people try to get money, such as poor people, they are forced to do it "out on the street" as it were, because that is where their networks are found. Poor people do not have access to large bank accounts from which they can embezzle. Poor women who are not a part of the job market have little choice but to openly make their living illegally. When wealthy white men try to get more money, it is a "secret business matter." When poor, working class, and Third World women try to get enough money to survive, it is perceived of as a "crime" for which they are locked away.

SESSION 2: What Is Really "Criminal"?

Goals: To explore participants' notions of what is "criminal" and what is not "criminal."

To look at the ways in which we define "crime."

As mentioned in the summary of session 1, the process of labeling "criminals" in our culture is tied to factors of race, class background, and gender. We do not often see wealthy, white males who engage in activities such as embezzlement, tax evasion, corporate payoffs, and medicaid fraud ("white collar crimes") go to prison. Because their crimes are not visible, the public tends not to think of these people as criminals. However, people who visibly break the law, who are charged with crimes, and who go to prison are regarded by the public as criminals.

An important aspect of the labeling of women criminals in particular is the labeling of sexual acts such as prostitution criminal. This session shows in part how women's crimes are often closely related to their sexuality or their sexual-social roles as women.

Activity. This activity has been adapted from a high school curriculum developed by the Group School in Cambridge, Mass. It is a good way to have participants think about crime, criminality, and what is considered "wrong" and "right."

Ask one-third of the participants each to take a card, read it, and decide whether the action listed on the card is a "crime." When each one has decided whether she is "guilty" or "not guilty," she goes to one side of the room or the other.

I used these descriptions:

> You are a young woman, 17 years old. You never have money for clothes. Whenever you really want something, like a Christmas present or new spring clothes, you shoplift it.
>
> You are a young woman, age 22. You make your living by selling your body to men. You are a prostitute.
>
> You are a young woman, age 19. One night while walking down the street you were attacked and raped by a man you vaguely knew. In your anger, you got a gun and went looking for him at a bar you knew he frequented. When you found him, you shot him.
>
> You are a girl, age 15. You were arrested for shoplifting and you had been drinking. The police officer who arrested you grabbed your arm so tightly that he really hurt you. You bit his hand, and are now being charged with assaulting an officer.

These cases are all taken from women's actual cases. Facilitators may want to make cards based on local cases. Many different kinds of cases can be written up that accurately reflect the reasons why women are in prison.

A second third of the participants takes one of the participants with a card as a partner. Those who have pleaded "not guilty" are paired with participants who will try to convince the class that they are "guilty." Likewise, the participants who have pleaded "guilty" are paired with those who will prove to the class that they are "not guilty." The remaining third of the participants, those who have neither chosen a card nor volunteered to act as prosecution or defense, act as the jury. This activity brings out participants' opinions about what is "criminal" and allows them to role play the courtroom procedure. This role play was particularly enjoyed by those participants who had personally experienced the courts or knew about the court experience of a friend or family member.

Questions/Issues. Discussion questions and issues that emerge from this activity help participants think about their opinions about crime. Suggested questions that can be used to supplement this activity are:

- Do you feel that an act is "criminal" when it is committed for economic survival (e.g., shoplifting, prostitution)?

- Do you feel that an act of violence is "criminal" when it is used in self-defense (e.g., trying to hurt someone who is attacking you)?

- Who makes the laws? Who decides what is "criminal" for the majority of people?

- Are laws arbitrary (e.g., enforced for some and not others)?

Summary of Session. As mentioned in the introduction, over 90% of the women who enter prison do so because they have committed economic crimes. Third World, poor, and working-class women are most likely to face choices of making a living that are not consistent with dominant cultural values. These activities point out how arbitrary making and enforcing laws is, and clarify the process of labeling "criminals."

SESSION 3: Looking at the Day-to-Day Life of Women in Prison

Goal: To show participants the day-to-day life of women prisoners through the prisoners' own eyes.

Activity. During this third class session I used a videotape made by women prisoners at a local women's prison. It is the life story of a woman who is raped by her father when very young, runs away from home, and is placed in a juvenile home. From there she goes on to become a prostitute and eventually to prison as an adult. I strongly suggest obtaining either this videotape or one that is available through one of the national distribution sources. You can also check with local prisoners' rights groups to see if a videotape, film, or slide show has been made in your area. As an alternative, you can invite a woman who has been in prison to the class to talk about her experience. The most important point is that women prisoners speak clearest about their own personal experiences. If at all possible participants should have the opportunity to listen to women prisoners talking through unfiltered media about their lives in prison.

It is not difficult to get a discussion going when a medium such as video is used. One class told me that this was their favorite activity because it gave them the opportunity to see women prisoners and hear their perspectives on the ideas that we had been discussing. From the tape, several discussion questions emerged:

1. How does living in a tightly controlled environment affect the way women in prison act toward one another and toward the people who are watching over them, such as guards?

2. Where might women in prison find the support to get through day-to-day life? How are women prisoners able to maintain supportive relationships with their families and children while in prison?

One of the questions raised from this tape is the subject of lesbian relationships and women in prison. Participants wanted to talk at length about women prisoners' support systems and prisoners' relationships to one another, whether sexual, emotional, or mutually supportive in other ways. Lesbians who are prisoners often are forced to bear the burdens of heterosexism and homophobia as well as sexism. It is important to discuss women prisoners' supportive relationships with one another on whatever level they manifest themselves.

SESSION 4: Exploring the Writings of Women in Prison

Goal: To look at some of the writings of women in prison to further explore women prisoners' perceptions of their life situations, their imprisonment, and their futures.

This session expands upon the idea that women in prison are the best spokespeople for their own experiences. Exploring the writings of women prisoners is also an important addition to exploring the writings of Black women writers. Once the search for these writings begins, facilitators will find a rich source of material. See the Resource section for sources.

Activity. Pass out copies of the following poem by Erika Huggins, a Black woman and ex-prisoner, and ask participants to read it aloud. This is one of the most powerful poems I have found that connects the experiences of women in prison to the lives of all women.

I wake in the middle-of-the-night terror
next to the warm sleeping body of my lover
yet alone in the conviction that I am in a prison cell
shut away, suddenly, from all that makes my life.
I sense the great weight of the prison
pressing down on the little box of room I lie in
alone forgotten.
How often do women awake
in the prison of marriage
of solitary motherhood
alone and forgotten
of exhaustion from meaningless work,
of self-despising learned early,
of advancing age
alone and forgotten.
How many women lie awake at this moment
struggling as I do against despair,
knowing the morning will crush us once again
under the futility of our lives.
And how short a step it is
-- for us -- to the more obvious imprisonment
of bars and concrete
where our sisters lie
alone forgotten.
See now, in this middle-of-the-night emptiness
how little it matters
whether we wear a convict's ill-made cotton dress
or a velvet pantsuit --

We are possessions to be bought and sold,
We are children to be curbed and patronized,
We are bodies to be coveted, seized, and rejected
when our breasts begin to sag,
We are dummies to be laughed at.
I sense the great weight of the society
pressing down on the little box of room I lie in
alone and forgotten
like my sisters in prison.
If you hear me
consider
how the bomb of human dignity
could be planted outside your cell
how its explosion could shake
the foundations of our jail
and might burst open the door that separates you from me
how we might struggle together to be free.

Erika Huggins*

The following are some examples of questions that will stimulate discussion.

- How can we tell this woman has been in prison herself?

- Suppose this woman has not been in prison. What, in her experience as a Black woman, enables her to make the reference to a prisonlike existence?

- What are some of the connections Huggins makes between the lives of prisoners and the lives of all women? What are some of the isolated groups of women she talks about in the poem?

- Do you think all women are in a form of prison? Why? What keeps women from being "free"?

- If being a prisoner means having your behavior controlled, what about all women who are forced to stay in their homes after dark because of fear of attack? What about women who are beaten by their husbands in their homes? Are these forms of prison?

Discussing these questions encourages important connections and understandings about women in prison. As mentioned in the introduction, looking at the lives of women in prison from a feminist perspective -- i.e., one that connects the experiences of this isolated group of women to the experiences of all women -- is an important part of breaking down that isolation.

Note: Participants in the course were also provided with copies of The Turning Point, a journal of writings of the women at a local prison. There are several women's prisoner support groups around the country that are publishing the writings of women prisoners (see resources).

*Huggins, Erika. [Untitled]. Washington, D.C.: Off Our Backs. Volume 2, No. 8. Spring 1972.

SESSION 5: Young Women and Juvenile Delinquency

Goals: To explore ways in which young women become involved in the juvenile justice system.

To explore the effects of sexism in the juvenile system upon women involved with it.

Even more blatantly than the experiences of adult women, the experiences of young women in the system are clearly molded by their sex. The charges of sexual and moral crimes for young women under age 17 are twice as frequent as for adult women "offenders." The purpose of this session is to talk about the ways in which young women are labeled as offenders, and how they become involved in the justice system simply as victims of a sexist culture. One approach is to learn about juvenile delinquency in young women from the article suggested below (or others like it). Another is to structure the session so that the participants can share their own experiences with the juvenile system. Both approaches are delineated below.

Activity. Read the article by Meda Chesney-Lind entitled "Juvenile Delinquency: The Sexualization of Female Crime." The article is a good analysis of why young girls enter the juvenile system, are treated differently from boys who enter the system, stay in the system longer because of sexist ideas about the morality of young girls, and are labeled as "fallen" more often than boys.

Questions/Issues. The juvenile justice system was set up some fifty years ago for the express purpose of watching over the morals of young children and assuring their obedience to authorities and parents. To this date workers in the juvenile system frequently use this justification to apprehend young people and place them in custody. This attitude towards juvenile delinquency has affected young girls in different ways from boys. Sex-role stereotypes reflect social expectations and approval of boys as aggressive "go-getters," who are supposed to sexually "sow their oats" and who should strike out on their own and challenge authority. Girls, on the other hand, should be sexually inexperienced, submissive to their parents and other authorities, and avoid activities that will label them as brave or aggressive.

Facilitators may want to do their own local research about the experiences of adolescent girls in juvenile court or visit juvenile court for a day to see the differences in the treatment of boys and girls.

The following questions based on the Chesney-Lind article are offered for discussion:

- The juvenile system is much more concerned with the sexual morality of young women than young men. For example, why do you suppose that juvenile court procedure is to take a vaginal smear from a young woman accused of car theft?

- One-half of young women "offenders" are charged with running away from home, "incorrigibility," "waywardness," "truancy," "sexual delinquency," or being a "person in need of supervision." Only one fifth of young men are charged with any of these "crimes." Why do you think there is such a difference?

- Young women stay incarcerated for much longer periods of time than young men, in the name of "protection." What are they being protected from? Growing up? Becoming sexually active and becoming pregnant? Being independent?

Activity. Role play the experiences of an adolescent girl labeled a "juvenile offender." It is becoming increasingly clear that many girls are running away from home because of sexual abuse by male family members. This role play was extremely effective in one of the sessions where several of the participants had had experience with the juvenile system.

Situation: A girl, 13 years old, has run away from home because her father has sexually assaulted her on several occasions. He is an alcoholic and her mother works nights to support the family. The girl has been picked up by the police. The role play opens when she and her parents have been asked to appear before a juvenile judge in private session. There are four characters: the girl, her father, her mother, and the judge.

Questions/Issues. Keep the role play explanation minimal because it allows the participants to be creative with the characters. Young women also learn about their perceptions of fathers and male authority figures by portraying one. This activity also stimulates discussion about alternatives to the juvenile system and ways the father should be held accountable for his own behavior rather than blaming and punishing the girl.

Summary of Session. This session helps participants to focus upon the different treatment given to girls and boys in the justice system. It becomes evident that it is much more of a "crime" for girls than boys to be sexually active, and to be independent from their parents. Participants in both courses responded well to this session and were able to comfortably relate their own and their familys' juvenile court experiences. Providing a nonjudgmental atmosphere where participants are free to share their experiences and thoughts about contact with the legal and juvenile system is of the utmost importance. It may well be seen that most young women who are taken into court for "crimes" are not "criminals" at all, but healthy young people!

SESSION 6: Alternatives to Imprisonment for Women

Goals: To explore alternatives to locking women up for their behavior.

To think about ways of establishing communication and building networks with women prisoners.

Throughout the sessions, participants have been looking at why women are in prison, what happens to them when they get there, and how they are labeled as "deviants" and "fallen" women. What becomes clear is that women don't need prison. Women need jobs, stable living situations, money to care for themselves and their children, refuge from abusive husbands, and help with drug and alcohol abuse. There are perhaps a few women who do need restricted living situations. With this realization, participants can begin to creatively explore options other than the prison experience for women.

Activity. Introduce a writing assignment about alternatives to imprisonment for women. Present participants with three cases about women who would potentially be sent to prison. Examples follow.

- A woman consistently shoplifts to provide clothes and toys for her children. She is on welfare and has been to court many times for shoplifting.

- A woman with three small children fights back against a drunk and abusive husband. She stabs him with a kitchen knife and kills him. She is charged with manslaughter.

- A woman makes her living by prostitution. She is forced to give all of what she makes to her pimp, so she cashes bad checks for her own survival.

Ask the participants to write a one-page description of an alternative to sending the woman to prison.

Questions/Issues. In my sessions, we spent one-half hour writing and the rest of the session discussing our writing. Participants came up with such ideas as halfway residences where women and their children could stay to receive counseling, vocational training, educational resources, and so on. In no case did participants propose restricted environments where every detail of women's daily lives is predetermined for them, as is the case in prison.

Alternate Activity. Rather than a writing assignment, have a discussion about alternatives using these or similar cases. What is most important is for participants to think about a society where prisons would not be an option for most aberrant behavior. An important realization is that we as a society have not been at all creative in trying to change people's behavior. Rather, the labeling of certain groups of people and channeling them into prison has been the norm. We have only to look at the lives of prisoners to verify this fact. Hopefully this course is a beginning step toward that process.

Questions/Issues. This session should stimulate a lot of questions about breaking down the isolation between women prisoners and their communities. After the discussion of alternatives, throw out the following thoughts for discussion for those who wish to connect with the lives of women prisoners.

- Is there a women's prison in our area? How can we find out more about it?

- Is there a volunteer program in the prison? Can we find out about it and perhaps work in the prison?

- Can we find the writings of local women prisoners?

- Can we follow the cases of local women prisoners?

- Can we take the time to find out about the cases of nationally known women prisoners and political prisoners through sources other than the popular media, such as defense committees and alternative publications?

- How can we contact women prisoners through issues we all share as women (e.g., shared prenatal classes, child care, parenting discussions, non-traditional vocational training)?

SUMMARY

Underlying all the course material is the assumption that women prisoners are an extremely isolated group of women with large amounts of untapped and unappreciated skills. They as a group have much in common with other isolated groups of women in totally controlled environments, as well as with women generally. Part of a feminist analysis of women in prison is to see how this particular group of women fits into the framework of women's cultural roles, and to understand that women in prison may be subjected to the very worst sexist and racist treatment. Recognizing that society plays a large role in keeping this group of women separated from the rest of us is the first step to breaking down that isolation.

Women and Their Working Lives

ELAINE KOERNER and SUSAN LEIGHTON, feminists, educators and writers, have had extensive experience in both paid and unpaid work. Elaine's paid work includes community action outreach, newspaper production, editorial and technical writing, and teaching. Her unpaid work has been in the home, at school, and in the community. She is a staff member of a feminist magazine and of Community Union, a national citizens' advocacy group. Susan's paid work has been as a therapist/counselor, a community organizer, a codirector of a residential community school for adolescents with special needs, a policy planner, an editor, a journalist, and a copywriter. Her unpaid work includes being a single parent and homemaker.

Women and Their Working Lives

Women have historically been victimized in their relationship to their work. Generally, they have been relegated to the secondary sector of the job market, which includes the less desirable jobs with low wages, low benefits, poor working conditions, job insecurity, little chance for advancement, and arbitrary supervision. The primary sector includes the desirable jobs with higher wages, higher benefits, good working conditions, job security, advancement, equity, and due process in administering rules.

Clearly there is something wrong with this system -- at least for women. What can be done about it? There are some analysts of the situation who feel that this barrier can be penetrated through education and job training. They believe that if an adequate amount of money and commitment can be channeled into these areas, women and minorities will not be at such a disadvantage.

There are other analysts who feel that there is such strong institutional discrimination that such an effort would be insufficient, perhaps even wasteful. In their view, there should be strong and enforced antidiscrimination laws and a restructuring of jobs to offer more opportunities to women.

In designing this course both these theories seemed relevant -- change on both fronts needs to be pursued. It is important to remember that although education and training, especially training directed toward learning a specifically defined job, is essential, when comparing women and men with equal education, the access to jobs is limited for women. Within the primary sector, the highest jobs, ones with the most power, prestige, and salary, are held by men.

Many studies by Federal agencies and private industry have compared median income levels and educational attainment for race and sex. Generally, women with college degrees and men with high school diplomas earn similar salaries. A major problem today is that faced by female heads of household. These women find their earning capacities limited by parenting responsibilities and lack of education. The women most in need of work and money, single parents, suffer from economic insecurity. Their families have a one-in-three chance of living below the poverty line.

Even if a woman has the financial means, education, and training opportunities to make work choices, a multitude of other barriers exist. Women often lack confidence. Their families and the world around them have already determined their limitations. It is difficult and threatening for women to consider their options, and it is not easy to pursue these options when there is no support. Men continue to dominate many job fields and hold positions of power even in those fields largely populated by women. Most women continue to work at jobs with little financial reward or social recognition and in the surplus, part-time, and volunteer labor forces. The economic system in this country, built upon exploitation of women and minorities, with wealth and power concentrated in the hands of a few white men, has perpetuated these limited work roles. This work trap reinforces negative self-images and economic powerlessness for many female workers.

There have been times, however, when some of these barriers to women working have fallen. For example, during wartime women workers were in demand to perform the jobs either newly created by the wartime economy or vacated by men. Large numbers of women entered the work force. They performed "men's" work and there were day care facilities available for their children. Suddenly it was respectable for women to work. The situation reverted when the wars ended.

Women entering the labor force today face many problems. Handling a job plus family responsibilities can be overwhelming, especially for the single mother or a woman whose partner does not share home responsibilities. For those few women in positions of power, other problems arise. Power has traditionally been defined in male terms. Women with work power find their sexuality questioned. Because power is male, it follows in many people's minds that women who have or aspire to power must be men, or hate men, or be lesbians. Aside from the issue of supporting whatever sexual identity women choose, the other issue is that sexuality has no intrinsic relationship to work capabilities or work performance.

It is difficult for women to redefine work power. This involves looking beyond the traditional trappings of hierarchy and oppression. In a new work world, everyone would have an income that allowed them to live decently, and would share work responsibilities with others for maximum self-growth. Women and Their Working Lives aims to broaden participants' attitudes toward viable work for themselves and all women, increase participants' job-seeking skills, and underline social and political reasons for women's work history. The course seeks to help participants gain work power and use that power for change in their own lives and in society.

GOALS/OBJECTIVES

Women and Their Working Lives has three major goals.

- To explore how the present economic structure and social expectations affect women's relationship to work.
- To help women broaden their attitudes toward work while supporting their present capabilities.
- To provide practical information and tools for women to use in pursuing work.

The first session focuses on developing a broad definition of work as a context for the entire course. Then the session focuses on participants' personal work history so that they can make a connection between their own experience and the practical information and political exploration that follows. The next several sessions help participants realize personal work strengths and develop an awareness of job barriers women face. A resource sheet, compiled by the facilitators, is a crucial link between the course and women's subsequent job search. Through collective information sharing and group support, these sessions seek to further develop the relationship between personal and political work issues for women.

The final two sessions place heavy emphasis on practical information related to finding meaningful work. Women have too long been denied access to hard facts

in favor of nurturing their intuitive side. This sensitivity, combined with the practical knowledge we all need to be effective, can empower women to approach the work world with a stronger sense of themselves and the cultural resistances they face in the labor market. The last session is devoted entirely to role playing. As a culmination of previous sessions, it simulates the action we hope women will be engaged in after the course is over.

METHODOLOGY

We designed the course with the philosophy that the most important learning is learning that participants engage in among themselves. Given this philosophy, we saw our responsibility as being sensitive to each woman's psychological and informational needs. We encouraged each woman to invest herself in the course, relating factual and practical information in an interesting manner, and helping the group to gain closure on specific discussions.

Although the course is adaptable to a variety of educational settings, some aspects such as the resource sheet were designed for a group from a shelter for battered women and a group of women in prison. We chose these institutions as our teaching sites because we feel that battered women and women prisoners have been subjected to environments that almost completely stifle their potential for positive self-growth. These restrictive environments increase the difficulties that all women face in finding meaningful work.

We feel that it is crucial for women in institutions to critically examine the system that has imprisoned them. With an increased understanding of sexism and racism, women in prisons and other institutions can more clearly understand the current power structure. This understanding, combined with practical skills and a positive sense of self, can better equip women to leave these institutions and to make a decent life for themselves.

Women staying at two shelters for battered women were invited to attend the first course, which was held in a downtown Boston office. Although this meeting place was seen as a central location, participant turnout was poor. This emphasized to us that women in these situations have a strong need for learning environments that are nonthreatening. Based on our experience, we suggest that facilitators either try to arrange for the course to take place at the site itself or that extensive liaison work be done with staff and residents to ensure that participants are able and want to travel to another location.

At the women's prison we had ample opportunity to do advance liaison work. We spent time talking with counselors and educational staff people to learn more about the conditions at the prison and to familiarize the staff with our purpose. We also tried to meet as many women prisoners as possible by eating lunch in the dining hall, dropping in on a career counseling class, and spending time in the recreational area. We introduced ourselves to each woman, mentioned what we would be doing, asked her opinion about whether it seemed relevant, and told her we hoped she would come to the course. In addition, we displayed posters throughout the community building.

The prison has a population of approximately 100 women and 30 men, and is designated as a minimum security facility. Participants in the course were white and

Third World women in their twenties and thirties. They had held socially acceptable jobs such as nurse's aide, gas station attendant, and dog kennel manager -- jobs often with minimal security. A number of participants had also done illegal work, particularly drug dealing. During the course, we talked about the skills involved in this type of work that could be transferred to other work settings. We also discussed the lack of choices that forces women, particularly ex-offenders, to do illegal work, thus returning them to institutions and trapping them within this cycle.

It quickly became obvious that participants desired practical information and validation of the work skills they possessed. Much of the work they had done had been devalued. Participants expressed concern about the effect of their prison record on future employers. Aside from legal concerns (and we urged the women to know their legal rights in job situations), we suggested participants approach the situation positively. We brainstormed what they learned while in prison and the names of people within the institution who would be good references. We suggested that participants try to determine how to deal with each prospective employer. In addition, we spent time exploring reasons why there is prejudice against ex-offenders.

We emphasized the importance of using existing resource support groups, especially those that exist for ex-offenders and ex-drug users. We felt that these resources were crucial links between our course and participants' efforts to gain meaningful work. In addition to distributing resource sheets (see session 4) to each participant, we also placed a copy of the document from which the sheet was taken in the prison library.

As facilitators, we found it extremely important to move from the practical to the theoretical and from the personal to the general in our session discussions. For example, in the session dealing with job leads, we began the discussion by describing a number of techniques for locating job leads. When we realized that the group didn't seem interested, we asked one of the women if she had ever tried the method we had just described. When she said "no," we asked her how she had gotten a job she had described in a previous session. By moving from the particular and the personal to the general, much of the information we wished to convey was discussed. The difference was that it originated from the participants.

We arranged seating in a circular fashion. As facilitators we sat with the group. For activities that required individual effort, we had participants work in pairs, to create a supportive atmosphere rather than one that generated anxiety or competition. At the end of each session, we encouraged women to give feedback about the session. We moved around the circle and asked each woman what did and did not interest her, what was unclear, and what information she might like to have. Thus, in both the process and content of the sessions, we emphasized sharing information and demystifying knowledge.

RESOURCES

The following resources are suggested. The most important resources were women workers themselves and organizations designed to assist women in finding work. We did not do a lot of reading in this course, but did talk extensively with people at their job sites and at organizations providing services for women workers. Therefore, the bibliography and the resource sheet for session 4 should be used as

guides for developing similar lists for your community, and for gaining increased political awareness about the issues surrounding women and work.

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Carkhuff, Pierce, and Willis Friel. Get a Job. Amherst, Mass.: Human Resource Development Press, 1975.

Effectiveness of Existing Resources. Boston: Diversion of Female Offenders, 1977.

Lederer, Muriel. The Guide to Career Education. New York: Quadrangle Press, 1974

Sexual Harrassment at the Workplace. Cambridge, Mass: Alliance against Sexual Coercion, 1977. P.O.Box 1, Cambridge, Mass. 02139

U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. "Jobs for Which Junior College, Technical Institute, or Other Specialized Training Is Usually Required." Washington, D.C.

_____. "Jobs for Which a College Education, Technical Institute, or Other Specialized Training Is Usually Required." Washington, D.C.

_____. "Jobs for Which a High School Education, Technical Institute, or Other Specialized Training Is Usually Required." Washington, D.C.

_____. "Jobs for Which a High School Education Is Preferred but Not Essential." Washington, D.C.

_____. Occupational Outlook Handbook. Washington, D.C.

U.S. Department of Labor, Employment Standards Administration, Women's Bureau. "Working Mothers and Their Children." Washington, D.C.

_____. "Women Workers Today." Wasnington, D.C.

_____. "Mature Women Workers: A Profile." Washington, D.C.

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CONTENT

SESSION 1: Women Are Workers

Goal: To help women value their unpaid and paid work.

In our society work is defined as something one is paid for and, most often, something that is done outside the home. Many women do not do this type of work. For women to receive credit for their work, the definition of work must be expanded. Raising children is work; housework is work; volunteer work is work. But because we live in a money culture, people come to believe that these tasks are not "work." Lack of income in this culture creates a feeling of worthlessness, not to mention financial dependence. This session includes two activities. They can be done alone or in sequence, depending on the allotted time.

Activity. Develop a definition of work as a group. First, ask the group to describe "work." Write ideas on the board and discuss them, using the points described below. Allow about 15 minutes for this activity.

Questions/Issues. We stressed the following issues in this activity.

- As women we are often told raising children is the most valuable role we can have. Why aren't we paid for doing this work? This contradicts the prevalent concept that the higher the salary, the more valuable the work.

- When children are grown up why aren't mothers considered unemployed and eligible to receive unemployment insurance or Social Security benefits for the work they have done?

- Why do many people think welfare mothers are "lazy" and "ripping off the system" when these women are doing valuable work -- "mothering"?

- How do our attitudes differ regarding "jobs," "work," and "careers"? Why do people approve of mothers with young children holding "part-time jobs," but not "careers"?

- Women who work in the home and who also hold an outside job are, in fact, holding two jobs. Why do people separate these jobs into personal time and work time?

- Women who work as mothers have difficulty also working outside the home. It is often difficult to find appropriate child care, and child care costs take a big bite from an already small paycheck. Women often feel guilty about leaving their children when the jobs available give them little personal or financial reward. Why is this so?

- In 1972, Chase Manhattan Bank figured women's work in the home to be "worth" $257.53 a week, or $13,391.56 a year. Women's work, according to their study, included 99.6 hours per week at twelve jobs -- nursemaid, dietician, foodbuyer, cook, dishwasher, seamstress, laundress, housekeeper, nurse, maintenance "man," gardener, and chauffeur. We added the jobs of bookkeeper, secretary, social director, hostess, and educational counselor/teacher during our session. (This is expanded upon in a later session.)

Activity. The purpose of this activity is to give recognition for participants' past work experiences, to increase participants' awareness of why many women work at low-paying and uninteresting jobs, and, most importantly, to help participants feel personally committed to the sessions that follow by sharing their own work history with the group. Women often devalue or totally negate work they have done. Men spend a lot of time talking about their work with their families and in social situations, particularly those working in prestigious job fields. Women rarely do; indeed, they often say, "I'm just a ...." Work women do and find rewarding deserves support and praise. Unsatisfactory working contitions deserve examination. Women often tolerate intolerable situations because they have been conditioned not to "make waves." Separating deserved self-criticism from societal blame is crucial to achieving a positive self-image.

Go around and ask each woman to describe a work experience she has had -- in the home, outside the home, legal, illegal, or volunteer. Ask questions and encourage other participants to do the same. Allow about 45 minutes for this activity.

Questions/Issues. To generate discussion, we listed the following points on the board:

- location of job -- in which part of the city, which building
- physical space -- description of room
- tasks performed
- co-workers and supervisors -- how many, what responsibility they had, how people treated one another, relationships between men and women workers, presence of white and minority workers
- work schedules and benefits -- how many working hours, lunch, breaks, holidays, vacation, salary
- transportation
- child care provision
- attitudes of family and friends toward work
- feelings about doing this type of work
- why left job

Women can help one another value the work they have done and promote societal recognition for this work, both attitudinal and financial.

Alternate Activity. An alternate activity is to have each participant describe work which women in her family have done, including how this influenced family interactions. The group could discuss family attitudes toward women's work and financial opportunities or lack of them.

SESSION 2: Women's Work Fantasies, Skills, Untapped Assets, and Cultural Barriers

Goals: To provide a supportive environment for women to share their work fantasies.

To help women realize that the skills of wife, mother, and housekeeper are some of the skills required to perform a "job."

To support the personality traits that participants bring to jobs.

To develop a clear picture of what society, and most of us, see as "women's" work and "men's" work.

Session 2 is composed of four activities. These activities can be selected according to their usefulness.

Activity. This activity provides women with an opportunity to share their work fantasies in a supportive environment. Although one's ideal work may not be attainable, fantasies and dreams are a good way to begin thinking about what one wants to do. When women examine their fantasies they can get a better sense of what they like to do and do well. Knowing this, they can relate their strengths to realistic work. To publicly talk of one's fantasies is very difficult, especially for women. We are allowed to dream, as long as our dreams remain private. As women speak more about their fantasies to one another, they will realize that other women share and support them. Women can begin to set goals and examine work possibilities more clearly.

Ask participants to describe their ideal work experience. Often participants ignore realistic considerations, so facilitators should make comments and encourage other participants to ask questions.

Questions/Issues. To stimulate discussion and provide some guidelines, we used the list of details suggested for the first activity in session 1, and considered factors such as preference for:

indoor work	outdoor work
work in a small place	work in a large place
dealing with detail	dealing with abstractions
active work	inactive work
supervised work	unsupervised work
mechanical work	nonmechanical work
direct contact with people	little contact with people
9-to-5 work schedule	flexible hours

These factors help point out differences among jobs. For instance, some jobs have more autonomy than others; e.g., an electrician as opposed to a clerical worker. An electrician goes out and does her job alone and moves from place to place, depending upon where the task is. A clerical worker works inside at a desk with others around and with fairly close supervision, and remains in one setting from day to day, task to task.

Alternate Activity. Have women describe their work heroine. One's work heroine could be anyone from a movie star to a rich woman worker, to a politician with lots of power, to a woman who works as a housecleaner. Women should be encouraged to recognize qualities that they share with their work heroine, and to examine why they chose this particular work heroine.

Activity. This activity helps women realize that the skills required to be a wife, mother, and, and housekeeper -- skills taken for granted when performed in those capacities, or not even regarded as skills -- are the same skills required to do a "job" and should be seen as such. Some of these skills are simple and manual, such as cooking and washing. Some are more skilled, such as decorating. Some are highly professional, such as rearing and educating children and counseling family members.

The facilitator should first explain that a "life activity" is something that requires energy and skill but is usually not given credit as a job. Use a chart or blackboard to list one or two life activities and their comparable job titles in the work world. The group then brainstorms to develop the list. Below is an example of life activities translated into job titles.

Life Activities	Job Titles
Help friends with personal problems	Counselor/therapist
Do household budget	Accountant/treasurer
Cook, prepare meals	Dietician/baker/cook
Do housework	Home economist
Fix toaster, vacuum cleaner, etc.	Appliance repairperson
Cut hair	Hairdresser
Sew	Seamstress
Shop	Buyer
Play a sport	Athlete
Speak English and Spanish	Interpreter
Become involved in a neighborhood center or political effort	Organizer/politician

Questions/Issues. Changing our attitudes toward our unpaid work in the home helps us to see our skills as comparable to those required for salaried jobs. But whether we choose to use these skills in or outside of the home, we should recognize that homemaking and parenting are valuable and necessary work.

Activity. This activity is to support personality traits that participants bring to jobs. However, facilitators should stress that these traits are often abused -- women are denied new work experiences and placated with the compliment that they are dependable and conscientious. Not only are these traits abused, they are encouraged by industry and business as a means to control the work force. A satisfied, docile work force makes no waves and means higher profits for employers. Facilitators should encourage participants to use these traits to assert skills on the job and in job-seeking situations.

To begin the activity, suggest that personality traits and working styles are important elements in work experiences. The group develops a list of traits individuals might bring to different kinds of jobs. While developing the list, mention specific jobs that these traits might be useful for. Below are some examples of working styles and personality traits.

Personality Traits and Working Styles

- good organizer
- dependable
- good supervisor
- considerate
- patience with detail
- knows the community well
- likes to plan projects
- gets along well with people

Questions/Issues. During the activity, we pointed out how women are exploited in work situations by raising questions such as:

- Which personality traits are women/men usually expected to have?
- Which personality traits are usually required for low-paying and high-paying jobs? Jobs with little or a lot of responsibility?
- Which personality traits are clerical workers supposed to have? How does this affect their opportunities to move into jobs with more responsibility and higher pay?
- How do certain personality traits (quiet vs. outgoing) affect job choices (office worker vs. office manager)?

Activity. This activity should develop a clear picture of what society and, therefore, most of us see as "women's" work and "men's" work. The lines are clearly drawn because of the relationships among work, money, prestige, and power. This activity is designed so women can make these connections and think about expanding their work options. With proper training women are just as capable as men to enter all fields of work. Women are entitled to this opportunity: the benefits are considerable. However, it is unjust that "women's" work does not receive these benefits as well. Ultimately, what is needed is a restructuring of jobs, the breakdown of sex and race barriers in employment, and the right for both women and men to choose work that fulfills their needs.

Have the group generate a list of typical "male" and "female" jobs. Then compare salaries, responsibilities, and training for each job. The facilitator should point out the relative ease of filling up the "male" column in comparison with the "female" column. It should be emphasized that women traditionally have not had as wide a variety of work options as men, but that the situation is changing because of the collective efforts of women. Point out that the capabilities for doing a job have little to do with being male or female. For example, the list for women usually includes nurse, teacher, and secretary. The list for men usually includes doctor, auto mechanic, and truck driver. The facilitator should assist the group in comparing the two lists by using specific criteria. She should ask participants to put the following symbols beside each job.

- beside each job that pays a lot of money
- beside each job that has a lot of prestige
- beside each job that involves either college training or technical school training
- beside each job that is closely related to work in the home
- beside each job that mostly involves talking with people or giving people a helping hand

With some exceptions, the list will indicate that most traditional male work involves a lot of money and prestige, while most female work involves little of either. In addition, traditional female work is often an extension of work in the the home and is often assumed to be for altruistic ends. The facilitator should stress that there is nothing wrong with wanting to do traditional women's work or wanting to have a decent income. Nor is there always a direct relationship between high educational level and high income level. A union roofer does not necessarily need to have a high school diploma and yet can earn more than $20,000.

Questions/Issues. We used three informational aids for this activity: the Occupational Outlook Handbook table of contents for suggested jobs, U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics booklets that describe jobs for which varying degrees of education or training are required, and U.S. Department of Labor data on typical salaries earned on those jobs. The following issues were explored in relation to this information:

- Nontraditional jobs can be attractive:
  good starting pay
  challenge
  enjoyment of physical labor
  pride in seeing results of one's efforts

- Women hold 97% of all secretarial jobs in the U.S. In Boston their average weekly income is $128.

- Men hold 93% of all skilled trade jobs in the U.S. In Boston their average weekly income is $224.

- Generally, the more desirable jobs in our society -- those that pay well and have high status -- are labeled as "unfeminine." Women who want these jobs face strong pressure and bring their sexuality into question. They face either direct or indirect accusations that if they were "real women" they wouldn't want such work, i.e., money, power, and prestige. Therefore, they must be lesbians or lacking in sexuality.

SESSIONS 3 and 4: Working Women and Community Advocacy Groups

Goal: To bring together participants, outside working women, and outside community advocacy groups dealing with women's employment to share information.

Both sessions are similar in format and goals. Their separation into two parts emphasizes the importance of having sufficient time for group discussions. We feel the exploration of life choices and future plans brings many feelings to the surface. Having ample opportunity for people to reflect upon the information and ask questions of themselves and others is crucial.

Activity. (session 3). This activity provides participants with an opportunity to meet with and hear from working women who have faced similar life pressures and obstacles. These women have, often with help, made some choices about what sort of work they want to do and have made their choice a reality, even though it has been difficult. We felt that this face-to-face contact was extremely important; there is nothing more inspiring than credible models. Hopefully,

women will leave this session with an expanded sense of their work opportunities. It is possible for women to begin thinking of a career in a field where they can at least progress along a job ladder; i.e., have advancement possibilities and some job security and, at best, have work they are excited about.

Invite women workers to come to this session (we invited three). Have each one talk briefly about her work. Encourage participants to ask questions of the women workers so they can enlarge upon what they have said.

Questions/Issues. Prior to this session, the women workers were given a list of questions to focus their presentations. Questions included:

- Description of job.
- What jobs did you hold before this one?
- Why did you change to your present job? Bored with your previous job? Wanted more challenge? More job security? More money? More independence?
- What education or training did it take to get this job? Where did you receive your training? How did you manage to afford it? How did you arrange for child care and other family responsibilties?
- How did you feel while going through this process? Were you supported by others? Were you hindered?
- What current child care arrangements do you have? Are you satisfied with them? Are your children? Is your partner? Do you or they have any doubts or guilt?
- How do you manage to combine work outside the home with work inside the home?
- How do you feel about your job: Has it fulfilled your expectations? Contributed to your own development? Made a contribution to society?
- What are your future job plans and dreams?

The choice of which women workers to invite to the session is crucial if credible models are to be provided. Care should be taken to find women who:

- are as much like the women in the course as possible, specifically in terms of class, race, age, and what they had to confront and make provisions for to arrive where they are now;
- are doing different sorts of work, to provide a range of possibilities for the participants;
- are "average" women, so as not to be discredited in participants' eyes as exceptional or lucky;
- have received some sort of help along the way, to encourage women participants to seek such help and to feel comfortable and optimistic about doing so.

Alternate Activity. We suggest you show one or both of the film vignettes described in the General Resource section. The one we showed was extremely inspirational, and excited the participants about their own capabilities and self-worth.

Activity. (session 4). This activity provides participants with an opportunity to meet with and hear from community advocacy groups dealing with women's employment. Representative groups should view work from different angles -- education and job skills, accessibility of child care, legal aid, union representation, and protection against discrimination and sexual harrassment. It is important for women to see employment as more than wage labor. Knowing where and how local support groups can benefit women workers is part of women's struggle in general.

Invite two or three community group representatives to come to this session. Have each representative spend a short time talking about her agency. Encourage participants to ask questions, therefore broadening discussion topics.

Questions/Issues. Prior to this session, participants were given a resource sheet titled "Where to Go for Help with Jobs." This is a local guide to practical and supportive services for women. It gives participants and community groups an opportunity to begin sharing resources and clarifying information. Our resource sheet was compiled specifically for the Boston area. Facilitators can compile their own using these suggestions.

Resource Sheet: Where to Go for Help with Jobs

There are lots of places you can go for practical help in figuring out what job you want and how to get it. Remember that you don't have to do it alone. There are places that can help you figure out what it is you want to do, how you can get training to do it, how to fill out job applications, how to go for interviews, how to go back to school, where to get money to live on while you are using these places. The people working there believe that getting a job is work in itself and people need help doing it.

DFO (Diversion of Female Offenders) 14 Somerset Street Boston 723-3750	A wonderful place for ex-offenders. Will refer you to where you can get the most help for what you need, and help figure out what your skills are and how to find a career. Individual and group counseling.
Neighborhood Employment Centers 150 Tremont Street Boston There are 17 offices. Look in the phone book for one near you or call the main office.	They help you decide what you want to do and get you into a job training program. They offer many kinds of programs and you get money to live on while you are training.
Women's Enterprises 755 Boylston Street Boston 266-2243	Very good place helps you figure out what you want to do. Offers training programs for technical occupations, such as electronics and energy conservation courses. You get money while being trained. Also offers counseling and help finding a job.
YWCA 140 Clarendon Street Boston 536-7940	Free courses in appliance repair, wood working, upholstery, and auto mechanics. Basic skill training in carpentry, electricity, plumbing, and painting. You get paid while training.
WINNERS 90 Warren Street Roxbury 440-9150	If you want to go back to school, they will help you figure it out.
Aswalos House 246 Seaver Street Roxbury 442-9645	Counseling, job placement, help in finding the right skill training or school. For Third World women.
Project ADAPT 143 Dudley Street Roxbury 442-2424	For former drug users. Goal is to get them jobs and/or training. General Equivalency Diploma (GED). Job training in auto mechanics, keypunch, and clerical work. Usually can get a job within three weeks.

Recruitment and Training Program 1216A Blue Hill Avenue Dorchester 296-0200	For women and minorities. All kinds of job possibilities from nontraditional to professional. They help you decide what you want to do. Tutoring and help with applications and interviews.
Dimmock Community Health Center 55 Dimmock Street Roxbury 442-8800	Must be CETA eligible, low income, underemployed, or unemployed. Training in health field. Hard work while training, but they place almost everyone.
Cambridge Economic Opportunity 485 Massachusetts Avenue Cambridge 868-3050	For unemployed or underemployed Cambridge residents. Job training and help with finding jobs.
CETA Look in phone book for local office.	Lots of different programs. Training, GED, jobs.
Casa del Sol School 405 Shawmut Avenue Boston 536-8281	For Spanish-speaking women. Classes in reading, writing, secretarial skills, vocational skills, and GED.

SESSION 5: Finding Work

Goals: To offer women practical tips on getting jobs and "nuts and bolts" job-seeking skills.

To show how classified ads can be used as practical and political job-seeking tools.

The following three activities explore how our culture has traditionally encouraged women to develop their emotional capabilities while neglecting rational thought and the practical side of life.

Activity. This activity offers women practical tips on getting job leads. It should help each woman realize that she has job-locating capabilities, encourage assertiveness when using job leads, and offer specific techniques for locating jobs.

Lead a discussion on how to find work by using various job leads and job-seeking tools. Allow about 10 minutes. To encourage assertiveness and self-confidence, ask participants to describe how they got previous jobs. Some women may attribute finding a job to "luck"; help them find more tangible reasons. Past success stories serve as positive reinforcement. Brainstorming additional ideas as a group helps women realize they can be creative in thinking of job leads. Transfer this energy to enthusiasm and confidence for following up leads. When women combine their conditioned attention to detail, thoroughness, and organization with assertiveness, they have strong capabilities for tracking down jobs.

Questions/Issues. We stressed the following specific points for discovering job leads.

- Resources for women have a special understanding of women's problems and a respect for women's capabilities. These include women's centers, community centers, and agencies that focus on special needs groups such as ex-offenders. We referred to the resource sheet used in session 4. We suggested that we all have skills to offer, but it makes sense to have someone fighting the bureaucracy with us.

- Friends, relatives, and neighborhood business people can be good job lead sources.

- If possible, go in person to inquire about jobs, even if there are no present openings; one job lead can lead to another.

- Get as much information as you can ahead of time and when you go to inquire about the job -- phone numbers, location, description of the job, names of key people.

- Be prepared in case you get an unexpected interview. Write down or think about your skills and a few questions about the workplace ahead of time. Anticipate questions. Bring along a pen, Social Security information, and a list of places where you have worked, with the dates and employers' names. Choose references in advance. Make sure spelling and information is correct.

Activity. The mass media play a major role in both reflecting and shaping our values. Newspapers and television, especially advertisements, have perpetrated a limited view of women's place in the world. This activity uses classified ads as practical and political job-seeking tools. We worked with women to choose appropriate ads to follow up, to gain further information, and to prepare themselves for job interview situations. Politically, we analyzed ads to increase awareness of the job barriers facing women.

Distribute copies of a recent classified ad section of a Sunday paper. Using specific ads on specific pages, point out practical and political information in the ads. Allow about 20 minutes.

Questions/Issues. The following are some specific issues that arose from the classified ad section we used.

- We used an ad for engineers to point out that technical and trade jobs are challenging and pay good salaries. Special programs now exist to train women for these jobs.

- An all-male photo of corporate executives generated a discussion of the connections among power, money, and opportunity.

- Specific ads were matched to skills and interests of participants.

- Ads for training programs in managing food and gas station chains were pointed out as potential training opportunities.

- A relocation job opportunity generated discussion about the advantages and risks of this type of move -- expenses, child care issues, and friends.

- We used an employment agency ad to warn participants about using this kind of resource. These agencies often emphasize high turnover of applicants, fees for services, a commission to the job counselor, and low salaries for the employee.

- Ads for office workers generated a discussion of society's and participants' attitude toward women doing office work. We gave recognition to the skills involved, but focused on exploitation and how women can use their office skills to move into more satisfying situations.

- Ads with job language jargon such as "experience in financial control" were demystified into life skill language such as "has records of family income and pays monthly bills."

Women must approach classified ads and all mass media on the offensive. Classified ads can be a useful tool if screened and analyzed to prepare the job seeker. Their power to intimidate and reinforce limited options can be diffused if these ads are criticized within a larger social context. We emphasized that changes have occurred. For example, there are no more "Help Wanted: Male, Female" ads; "draftperson" is used rather than "draftsman."

Activity. Like the first activity in this session, this one seeks to give women practical job-seeking skills. Distribute copies of a typical job application to participants. Have them fill out the application in pairs so the experience is

instructive rather than competitive. Each pair should decide which woman will use her personal work history. After completion, go over the application as a group, using a local library book as a resource tool. Allow about 30 minutes.

Questions/Issues. Our main purpose was to encourage positive descriptions of self. For example, volunteer work was recorded as work experience. Positive statements for leaving jobs were suggested, such as "wanted to gain new skills," "child care," and "moved." We stressed that we should be assertive on paper as well as in person.

SESSION 6: Job Lead Follow-Up: Role Play

Goal: To help prepare participants for an actual job lead follow-up.

Activity. The purpose of this activity is to role play follow-up situations in a supportive environment. Hopefully it will lessen the anxiety women feel when actually in these situations and help them anticipate what will transpire so they can prepare their responses. The activity should balance encouragement of individual capabilities with an awareness of job barriers.

Write a sample classified ad and job experience description on the board and use them as a basis for role play. Allow 60 minutes. Initially, as a facilitator, you can take on a variety of roles; for example, an "unsure" and then a "sure" job seeker confronting a prospective employer. This will enable you to point out different job-seeking approaches. Encourage participants to critique the situations. Then, ask participants to take on employer and job-seeker roles. Participants may use their own job history rather than the sample job history. Follow the role play situations with a group critique.

Questions/Issues. Listed below are some specific job lead follow-up situations.

- Phone Follow-Up to Ad. Women, like children, are encouraged to be seen and not heard. We emphasized that getting needed information is not being pushy; it's just being sensible.

unsure job seeker	doesn't give name, asks about applying, hangs up.
sure job seeker	gives name, asks about applying, asks other questions about the job, asks name of person speaking and person doing hiring and writes them down, asks when to fill out application and when applications close, mentions specific time when she will come in to apply, thanks person and calls him or her by name.

- Filling Out Job Application at Prospective Place of Employment. Assertiveness is called for here as in the phone follow-up.

unsure job seeker	doesn't give name, asks for application, fills it out and leaves, inappropriately dressed.

sure job seeker — introduces self, mentions where the ad was seen, asks for application, asks for other information such as job details and who is doing hiring, fills out application, asks if she can talk with anyone that day about the job, asks when applications close, when people will find out who is hired, name of person talking to, finds out if she can phone if she hasn't had word within a specified time, thanks person by name.

- Job Interview. Some questions are suggested specifically to raise issues of special importance to women; some may be grounds for discrimination suit if actually used in hiring.

Employers' Questions

- Have you had experience?
- Will transportation be a problem?
- Why don't you want us to contact Mr. Jones, one of your previous employers?
- What did you do between jobs?
- Who will care for your kids when you're sick?
- Do you plan to have more children?
- How long would you keep the job?
- Does your husband plan to change jobs or move?
- When would you be available?
- How do you work under pressure?
- How well do you supervise people?
- Why do you want this job?
- How much do you want to earn?
- Do you have any questions?

unsure job seeker — has negative responses, unsure of transportation, describes previous employer in deprecating manner, hasn't arranged child care, lack of enthusiasm, generally indefinite, no questions about job.

sure job seeker	converts past work, volunteer work, and work in the home into work experience, positive answers, has determined transportation and child care, accounts for time between jobs as worthwhile, shows confidence by asking questions about workplace and job tasks, brings in personal information that is an advantage, recognizes that questions relating to plans for more children or contraception are no business of the interviewer, do not relate to job performance, and are not questions that employers ask of men applying for the same job.

Other role plays the group might want to do include: job interview with a panel of interviewers; follow-up when refused a job; follow-up when hired; improving working conditions; fighting sex and race discrimination in hiring or on the job; getting a salary raise or promotion; and talking with other workers about forming a union.

Some men still hire women because they have good legs or don't hire them because they don't. Women need to get in touch with the anger they feel about the barriers to meaningful work, and understand it as part of a larger situation that must be changed. Rather than turn anger into self-blame, women can use that energy to cooperatively pursue their right to gain work skills and take a position of strength in the work world, as workers and as employers.

SUMMARY

Women and Their Working Lives is an important medium for exploring personal and political issues surrounding women's work. The suggested activities and resource lists are intended to help others begin exploring ways of demystifying the workplace and supporting women's collective efforts to gain meaningful employment and fair wages. We also suggest using audiovisual aides that depict women and work. The media resources described in the General Resources section are excellent aides for understanding our value as women workers.

COMMENTS AND CRITICISM

We would appreciate your response to the following questionnaire. Hopefully, we can keep in touch as we revise our materials and develop new ones. We would also like to hear about your program and would be glad to share your work with others involved in similar programs in our community. If you would like to know more about our project or the participating sites, let us know. Please tear out this page and mail it back to us.

1. What is the name of your organization? What kind of program is it?

2. How did you learn about our course materials?

3. Were our courses incorporated into other activities in your program or were they presented as a separate project?

4. Did you use the entire series of courses or just specific ones? Which courses did you use?

5. Do you plan to use this educational project on a short-term or a long-term basis? Was this a limited workshop series or an ongoing women's studies program?

6. Did the courses provide enough material for the group's interests and needs? Are there other kinds of resources that you would like to have? Which ones?

7. How many participants were involved in the courses/workshops? Number of women_____. Number of men_____. Ages_____. Ethnicity_____. Race_____. Class_____.

8. How did the participants feel about the content of the courses (e.g., activities, readings)? Which of the materials did you find useful? Which were not useful?

9. Other comments:

Please fold and mail

_____

_____

_____

stamp

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Attention: WEEA Program